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DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER
REDUCTION

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In response to the request formulated by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/117 A of 20 December 1995, the present report contains information on the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The report provides an overview of critical needs for enhancing the distinct programme and coordination capabilities of the International Framework of Action in relation to major strategic challenges in the fields of sustainable development and humanitarian assistance. It presents opportunities for action to meet those needs by improving the recognition of natural disaster reduction as a cross-cutting issue of sustainable development. The report relates natural disaster reduction to the United Nations coordinated approach to the implementation of global action plans in the context of the evaluation and overall review of Agenda 21, and contains proposals on the structure and contents of the preparatory process for the closing event of the Decade, to be convened before the year 2000.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the proclamation by the General Assembly, in its resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989, of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, concerted international efforts have been made to reduce the effects of natural disasters and similar emergencies through the International Framework of Action for the Decade (resolution 44/236, annex). The Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in Yokohama, Japan, in May 1994, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, contains the guiding principles and provides a plan of action for the realization of the Decade's goals in local communities and at the national, regional and international levels.

2. A variety of contributors from all involved sectors have become partners in applying the concept of the Decade. General Assembly resolutions 49/22 A and 49/22 B of 20 December 1994, the last biennial report on activities submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (A/50/201-E/1995/74), and the report on early-warning capacities of the United Nations system with regard to natural disasters (A/50/526) have provided specific examples of disaster-reduction activities being pursued around the world. Those reports have highlighted the need for more effective coordination in disseminating and applying disaster-reduction knowledge and action.

3. The report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on financial issues of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (A/50/521) pointed to the need for improved funding security for all aspects of the Decade and for effective synergies within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat.

4. In adopting resolution 50/117 A of 20 December 1995, the General Assembly reiterated the importance of convening a closing event of the Decade. The event would facilitate the full integration of disaster reduction into sustainable development and environmental protection by the year 2000 and would map a comprehensive strategy for disaster reduction in the twenty-first century. In this respect, disaster reduction is related to agendas for national measures and to international cooperation in implementing the action plans of the recent United Nations thematic conferences.

5. The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals on how the distinct programme and coordination capability of the secretariat of the Decade might be enhanced so as to enable it to effectively coordinate the activities of the Decade and promote the integration of natural disaster reduction into the sustainable development process.

II. PROGRESS IN DISASTER REDUCTION

6. Early in the Decade, the international scientific community took the lead, within the framework of the Decade, to demonstrate the feasibility of systematic natural disaster reduction for the protection of national assets and development accomplishments. Practical targets were established by the Scientific and

Technical Committee of the Decade, which remain as valid today as when they were conceived at the beginning of the Decade. Based on the overall recognition by the Member States of the United Nations of the merits of disaster reduction, many countries are proceeding to attain those targets through their own policy initiatives and through the commitment of essential human and material resources. Other countries are still in the process of recognizing the threat posed by natural disasters and of developing preventive strategies in order to protect their national assets.

7. Organizations of the United Nations system have contributed significant policy initiatives and have initiated programmes to promote disaster-reduction practices. These examples have been specifically referred to in earlier reports to the General Assembly. A comprehensive overview of activities will be provided in the regular biennial report on the Decade, to be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

8. The major United Nations conferences convened in the 1990s have highlighted the need to build national and local capacities in order firmly to integrate disaster-reduction measures into sustainable development programmes. The first of these, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, produced the global framework for sustainable development in Agenda 21.

9. Since the Rio Conference, the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, and the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in Yokohama in 1994, successive global commitments have been made at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994; the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and most recently, the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul, June 1996). One notable outcome of the Yokohama Conference was the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, which can best be achieved by integrating it with the coordinated implementation of action plans of the other international conferences.

10. The commitment to concerted international action for disaster reduction has broadened the appeal of disaster reduction. Natural hazards are recognized as having an intrinsic relationship with human-induced phenomena, such as technological or ecological conditions, which have an adverse impact on the environment. The effects of natural hazards, environmental degradation and sustainable development are also seen to contribute to involuntary mass movements of populations.

11. The process has benefited, in particular, from the commitment and participation of the developing countries in the Decade and in the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama. The developing countries have been active both on the political front, through the mechanism of the Group of 77, and through the practical involvement of all sectors of their society at the local, national, subregional and regional levels. The Group of 77 has recognized that disaster reduction can reduce the need for disaster relief and contribute effectively to the achievement of sustainable development.

12. Accelerated recognition of disaster reduction is also being encouraged by recent technological and commercial developments. The countries of the Group of Seven, working in a partnership with the information technology industry, have identified improved natural hazard warnings and communications as one priority area of interest, in conjunction with the opportunity of sharing technology with developing countries. As rapid advances in international telecommunications and information technology become global and more accessible to all Member States at reasonable cost, they will make possible the real-time dissemination of disaster-reduction experience and practices. In this context, multi-sectoral efforts towards an international convention on coordinated telecommunications use in disaster mitigation and response must be encouraged.

13. A few examples will demonstrate the vitality and range of interests that are now incorporating disaster awareness and reduction practices into mainstream activities. Experiences are being shared from recent disasters like the great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, which struck Kobe in Japan in January 1995. Based on this and similar experiences, the United States of America and Japan recently agreed that natural disaster reduction should be included on the countries' common agenda for cooperation at the highest level. Both countries pledged to strengthen international networks for exchanging early warning data on natural disasters and also to share technical experience gained from lessons about seismic hazards. Japan has also taken an initiative with its partners in Asia to improve disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation on the basis of the lessons learned from the Kobe earthquake.

14. Sharing experiences and information among industrialized and developing countries provided the rationale for bringing together a wide range of professions and representatives of the International Framework of Action of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to the Pan-Pacific Conference on Natural Hazards in 1996 in Vancouver, Canada. The meeting, which was organized by private organizations, industry, non-governmental organizations and national and local government officials, brought together participants involved in disaster-reduction activities from North and South America, Asia and the Pacific. This is a significant example of how international collaboration can join public policy makers, local community interests and commercial concerns for sharing of disaster-reduction experiences.

15. Similar meetings sponsored jointly by regional institutions and Governments have been held during the past year in South America, in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in the Pacific. Other events will be held in Europe.

16. The national association responsible for promoting Decade affairs in South Africa convened a subregional conference in March 1996. The meeting explicitly linked disaster reduction with national development objectives. In addition to fostering efforts for disaster reduction within South Africa, the participation of officials from southern Africa also provided an impetus to the strengthening of regional relationships.

17. Both China and the United States have increased their efforts to implement national strategies for disaster mitigation. In each case, there was a common

recognition that neither of these countries' economies could continue to remain as vulnerable to the increasing severity of natural disasters.

18. In many countries, often with external support, the policy and technical requirements of disaster reduction are also being addressed at the national level. Resulting activities include national programmes of risk assessment, the establishment of institutional abilities with a designated national authority to address disaster reduction or conducting an inventory of existing professional resources available within a country. These developments are often integrated in, or resulting from, regional or intergovernmental collaboration such as within the European Union (EU) or CIS.

19. Perhaps most importantly, more countries are analysing their human resource requirements for disaster mitigation and are taking measures to provide the necessary education and training. Programmes such as the Disaster Management Training Programme, jointly conducted by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have demonstrated how the cost-effective investment of resources into risk analysis and preventive capabilities can initiate programmes which are integrated into national planning.

20. In the private sector, both small, local enterprises and major international corporations are more aware of the need to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters. They are increasingly developing countermeasures that ensure their business continuity. In some countries, engineering firms have identified expanding markets in hazard assessment, earth observation technology and risk management. This has often developed as a result of environmental impact assessments and dialogue between the public and private sectors.

21. Major international re-insurance firms have mounted advertising campaigns, directed towards public policy authorities and private investors alike, to inform about the benefits of disaster mitigation. Similarly, local insurance agencies are becoming more active in risk management by advising communities how to safeguard dwellings from cyclone or flood damage. Elsewhere, insurance interests are teaming up with public officials to give greater emphasis to the social and physical vulnerabilities of human settlements and infrastructure investment, when drafting legislation on land-use planning, natural resource management and environmental protection. An international conference sponsored by the Decade was held in Vladivostok, in the Russian Federation, in 1996 to address the issue of the insurance and disaster mitigation.

22. Progress to date has not been uniform, nor has it been consistent throughout the world. However, what must be appreciated and capitalized upon at the present stage of the Decade is the increasing diversity and variety of initiatives in the field of disaster reduction. Many of those initiatives are generated and undertaken outside activities of the United Nations, but they are indirectly the result of the promotional role which the United Nations system has played in fostering those developments. There is a noticeable growth in the perceived relevance of disaster reduction by all concerned sectors, with particular emphasis in the private domain. This suggests that the ultimate success of the Decade will rest more with the actions and commitments of those

international, national and local community partners which exist beyond the United Nations. With the Decade entering its eighth year in 1997, it becomes necessary to consolidate these interests even more firmly. The closing event of the Decade, and in particular the process leading up to it, provide the mechanism.

23. The United Nations retains a critical role in ensuring that the momentum that has developed for enhancing natural disaster reduction in the world is maintained. The impact of individual initiatives should not become limited through isolated knowledge. The United Nations system must encourage information exchange to enhance education, training and the transfer of knowledge and technology.

24. The time has now arrived to consolidate existing progress in natural disaster reduction and link it firmly with economic and social development and environmental protection, which together form the mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. With the Decade, the United Nations has established a mechanism to support the international community's efforts to achieve social stability and economic well-being.

III. PROCESS FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

A. Basic needs

25. The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction determined the development of a comprehensive and effective strategy for disaster reduction beyond the Decade and into the twenty-first century as the key requirement for the remaining years of the Decade. Action in this respect has to start now, and in a coordinated and structured fashion. As elaborated in the report on the Decade to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, this strategy will have to encompass both substantive and organizational aspects. It should emerge as the result of a process with full participation of all concerned sectors. A critical need to be pursued for institutional consolidation is the identification and active engagement of key collaborating and/or sponsoring organizations presently involved in various aspects of implementing disaster reduction throughout the world. The current International Framework for Action for the Decade provides the initial basis to proceed.

26. Options for future forms of organization after the Decade has come to a close need to be developed. These may include the establishment of an appropriate private facility. Possibilities include an international non-governmental organization, a foundation underwritten by national Governments and other concerned bodies, or an internationally recognized centre of excellence accommodated by a university or technical institution. The options will also have to recognize the ongoing interests and responsibilities of the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations.

27. The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction must encourage all such initiatives and evaluate their potential in the process towards the closing event. The secretariat for the Decade will explore those feasibilities expeditiously.

B. The closing event of the Decade

28. General Assembly resolution 49/22 A already provides the mechanism to initiate the process of international coordination towards the evaluation of the Decade's success and the options for sustained disaster reduction activities in the future. By that resolution, the Assembly decided to convene an event before the year 2000 to carry out an overall review of the accomplishments of the Decade and to map a strategy for continued disaster reduction activities into the twenty-first century. This decision was confirmed and further elaborated during the fiftieth session of the Assembly with the adoption of resolution 50/117 A, in which the Assembly noted the need for sectoral and cross-sectoral meetings to facilitate the full integration of disaster reduction into the substantive efforts for sustainable development and environmental protection by the year 2000.

29. The closing event of the Decade will be the culmination of a process that started with the preparatory phase in 1987. The Decade has been conceived by the scientific sector and adopted by the United Nations system as a concept and mechanism within humanitarian and development activities. It has also been applied by entities outside the United Nations system. Consequently, the closing event itself, and the process leading towards it, will on the one hand be an integral part of United Nations formal action and will also draw upon sectors outside the United Nations. The closing event and its preparatory process will have to be productive and cost-effective.

C. The preparatory process

30. The closing event of the Decade will be convened under the auspices of the United Nations. Its structure, including the preparatory activities, will be based on the successful experience of the Yokohama Conference, which adopted a multidisciplinary approach to ensure participation of all concerned sectors of society, assembled within the International Framework of Action for the Decade.

31. The process towards the closing event will be built around a preparatory committee with equitable regional composition, which will develop the agenda for the closing event, its precise framework of participation, its intended outcome and proposals for the follow-up into the twenty-first century. The preparatory committee will organize two to three meetings in Geneva, in 1997, 1998 and, if necessary, in 1999. The work of the Preparatory Committee will take into account the work of committees for the Decade, the results of regional preparatory activities and other relevant entities as appropriate.

32. In addition to the formal preparatory process, maximum use will be made of thematic or regional events beyond the United Nations system to include seminars, workshops, symposia or conferences relevant to natural disaster reduction.

33. The General Assembly in resolution 50/117 A designated the secretariat of the Decade as the substantive secretariat for the preparation of the closing event. In executing this function and expected parallel activities, the secretariat for the Decade will involve all relevant bodies of the United

Nations system and will draw on the support of other international organizations, intergovernmental organizations and Governments. Within the formal preparatory process, particular attention will be paid to effective coordination of all concerned United Nations agencies and organizations through the inter-agency Steering Committee for the Decade and its Working Group.

34. In thematic terms, the preparatory process will be structured around the targets and overall objective of the Decade, as laid down in the annex to General Assembly resolution 44/236, proclaiming the Decade. It will take into consideration the findings of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction of May 1994 and the resulting Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action. It will also consider relevant action plans of other United Nations conferences related to the consequences of natural disasters and to the need for disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation.

35. Key areas of attention comprise first the analysis and reduction of vulnerability to natural hazards through natural disaster reduction, including the development of sound methodologies for the assessment of social and economic impacts of natural disasters and the cost-effectiveness of preventive action. Another critical area involves the improvement of the capabilities of the United Nations system and other concerned entities for early warning for natural disasters, which is closely linked with improved information management and communication capabilities. The establishment of organized network capabilities among all sectors of the International Framework of Action for the Decade is a particularly important aspect for individual members and institutions of the scientific and technical communities. Such networking is dependent upon the development of a sustained clearing-house capability within the Framework of Action for the collation and dissemination of best practices in natural disaster reduction. Promotion and awareness-raising on natural disaster reduction, including specialized publications and the effective and interdisciplinary application of scientific and technical knowledge in education and training, will be maintained. Finally, the integration of disaster reduction into national planning with the full participatory involvement of local authorities and local communities at risk represents a major challenge for the successful implementation of the Decade.

IV. FRAMEWORK

A. Special High-level Council

36. A specific proposal to establish a new Special High-level Council in 1997, in line with the recommendations of General Assembly resolution 49/22 A, has been prepared by the secretariat for the Decade. It foresees 5 to 10 internationally renowned individuals representing all regions of the world, who can influence high-profile funding initiatives and sustained political commitment on a global scale. The revised Council will be serviced in close synergy with the scientific and technical abilities of the Scientific and Technical Committee. The effectiveness of a reconstituted Special High-level Council is closely linked with advocacy for natural disaster reduction within the context of sustainable development. It is also dependent on the continuing functioning of the other components of the International Framework of Action for

the Decade, in particular its secretariat within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

37. Active functioning national committees are an essential prerequisite for a credible and feasible reconstitution of the Special High-level Council to support the intended political and advocacy role of future members of the Council.

B. Scientific and Technical Committee

38. The Scientific and Technical Committee met for its seventh session in Moscow in March 1996, at the invitation and with the financial support of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence of the Russian Federation. With the completion of the second rotation of Committee members, eight new members joined the Committee at its seventh session.

39. At the seventh session, the members of the Committee issued a statement to draw the attention of the United Nations and of the international community to the importance of disaster reduction within the development dimension and to the need for adequate resources within the context of technical cooperation. In addition, the statement expressed concern about the continuing lack of funds for the secretariat of the Decade.

40. In keeping with previous practice the Scientific and Technical Committee proceeded to discuss future programme requirements for three key subject areas of activity. First, training, research and the practical application of measures for disaster reduction provided a frame of reference to identify means to extend existing knowledge and experience to a larger audience of potential implementors. Existing organizational partnerships among technical and academic institutions, as well as between government agencies and non-governmental organizations on a regional basis were cited as appropriate mechanisms for disaster training and research.

41. The current status of the Decade's programme initiatives in information systems and in data management systems was the second area of focus for the Committee. The review included present opportunities and future considerations for the application of communications, space technologies and remote sensing for sustained disaster reduction practices. Those technologies also support both dissemination of early warning information and development of its capacities. This will be the subject of a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, in 1997, in response to resolution 50/117 B.

42. The Third area of attention was the continued utility of demonstration projects and their role in transmitting knowledge and newly established experience. The secretariat of the Decade has undertaken a review of existing demonstration projects to highlight those activities which can be useful in expanding the use of disaster reduction techniques. The report of the Scientific and Technical Committee, on its seventh session, and its recommendations, are available from the secretariat for the Decade. 1/

43. In seeking to become more directly involved on both sectoral and geographical issues and to give attention to the practical application of disaster reduction measures, the members of the Scientific and Technical Committee created working groups to provide added impetus to the following areas of activity: training; demonstration projects; communications and information management; early warning systems; and economic and preventive planning aspects.

44. The Committee agreed that the next session would focus on the closing process of the Decade and the importance of economic and preventive planning aspects of disaster reduction. At the next meeting of the Committee, which will be hosted in Paris by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and will be held jointly with the Inter-agency Steering Committee at the end of 1996, consideration will also be given to the relationships between the two Committees and their respective roles in the process of transition into the post-Decade period.

C. Contact Group

45. During the reporting period, the informal open-ended Contact Group of countries and United Nations agencies and organizations established at Geneva has continued, under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations Office at Geneva, to serve as an instrument for dialogue and advice on all major thematic issues relating to the Decade. The Group's core group has met regularly, placing an emphasis on enhancing the possibilities of integrating natural disaster reduction into sustainable development. This has been done by considering the results of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction of May 1994 within a coordinated approach of the United Nations system towards implementing global action plans.

46. The Group has pointed out the potential benefits of a similar mechanism in New York with specific emphasis on relating the Decade to the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development, as well as ensuring involvement in the review process of Agenda 21. These actions will provide further impetus to the full participation and involvement of Member States into the substantive and organizational preparations for the Decade's closing event.

D. National committees

47. The national committee concept represents the backbone for the successful implementation of the Decade's targets and overall objective by 1999. The activities are being implemented nationally. This trend is gaining momentum as more national authorities and specific agencies announce strategic disaster-mitigation initiatives. It is encouraging that an increasing number of national entities have become involved through their participation in programmes for the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, with more than 60 countries reporting their activities in 1995. Many of those activities were used to initiate longer-term programmes on the theme "Women and Children - Key to Prevention". The special publication for children and schoolteachers used to

promote the theme has proved to be a popular vehicle for many national committees.

48. Some of the national committees work well, but many more require urgent advice and technical or collaborative support on how to progress in line with the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action. As more national committees are approaching the secretariat of the Decade for assistance in formulating national disaster-reduction strategies and in seeking expert support, the secretariat's ability to serve the national committees effectively is a crucial factor for the remaining years of the Decade. The secretariat must be able to communicate with national committees through correspondence, visits, meetings and conferences. Many national committees provide an organizational option for national-level disaster reduction beyond the year 2000. They will have to be firmly integrated in the Decade's ultimate evaluation of success.

E. Inter-agency Steering Committee

49. The Working Group of the Inter-agency Steering Committee for the Decade has continued to provide a valuable forum for coordinating the implementation of programmes for the Decade. A meeting of the group in January 1996 set the framework and priorities for inter-agency approaches during the reporting period, including efforts to draw attention to disaster reduction within the respective governing boards of the concerned United Nations agencies and organizations.

50. The Working Group has agreed on the need to sustain attention on the key thematic issues of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action. The members of the Working Group have been actively involved in the Decade's initiative to improve the international coordination of early warning systems, as well as in the development of a basic policy on training and education for the application of scientific knowledge in disaster-reduction practice.

51. The Working Group is planning a formal session of the Steering Committee at the end of 1996, to launch the preparatory process for the closing event of the Decade within the United Nations system. The Committee will develop a work plan for concrete action during the remaining years of the Decade.

52. In addition, the Working Group has contributed in the preparation of the report on natural and environmental disasters in small island developing States for the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The report has been finalized by the secretariat of the Decade and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

F. Coordination within the United Nations system

53. Within the United Nations Secretariat, the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction has enjoyed cooperation with the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Department for Development Support and Management Services. Apart from the issue of natural and environmental disasters in small island developing States

and the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Small Island Developing States, cooperation with the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development has extended to the design of indicators for human and economic losses due to natural disasters. The Department for Development Support and Management Services is proceeding to give greater attention to disaster-reduction issues, having developed a global programme for the integration of public administration and the science of disasters.

54. The agencies and organizations of the United Nations system have continued their active involvement in activities of the Decade and the sectoral promotion of disaster-reduction issues. These include the World Health Organization (WHO), WMO and UNESCO and its International Oceanographic Commission.

55. The importance of the efforts being made at country level to apply disaster-reduction awareness and practices in the context of United Nations development programmes should be noted. The interest and the involvement of United Nations resident coordinators and resident representatives of UNDP have given considerable impetus to this process. Increasingly, established development planning and coordinating mechanisms such as the country strategy note are used to accommodate a greater awareness of disaster implications in national developmental planning efforts. This development supports the integration of comprehensive risk assessments and mitigation plans into the national development process.

56. With a view to formulating the global natural disaster-reduction strategy for the twenty-first century called for by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, cooperation between the International Framework of Action for the Decade and the United Nations development programmes, agencies and organizations should be strengthened further.

G. Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

57. The main activities of the secretariat of the Decade during the reporting period involve three major areas. The first is servicing the International Framework for Action. The Scientific and Technical Committee is the primary means of the secretariat for communicating with the scientific community. A second responsibility is the promotion of the concept of the Decade through public information, awareness-raising and training, including the active promotion of disaster reduction. Finally, the active involvement of staff in relevant legislative and programme activities of the United Nations system has continued.

58. In addition, the secretariat has participated in the strategic orientation and analysis of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, of which the Decade is an integral part. This exercise has reaffirmed natural disaster reduction and the Decade as core activities of the Department and contributed to the development of a detailed work plan for 1996-1997 and a related financial strategy.

59. The secretariat of the Decade has also continued its thematic project involvement, including studies on socio-economic and legal aspects of disasters and a global project for disaster resistant urbanization and seismic risk assessment in urban areas (RADIUS).

60. The 1995 International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction was very successful. The campaign developed national capacities to encourage proactive roles for women and children before disaster strikes. More than three times as many organizations reported activities to the Decade secretariat as in 1994. Over 70 round tables and conferences addressed the theme of the Day worldwide, many of them being conducted at high level and with tangible outcomes. A new booklet, "Learning about Natural Disasters", was a great success, with over 200,000 copies produced in eight languages by the Decade secretariat and many partners around the world. Requests for translation into 15 additional local languages and 50,000 requests for additional copies of the booklet remain unfulfilled pending additional funding.

61. Other major publications issued during 1995 included Stop Disasters magazine, the Decade newsletter for the Americas produced in Costa Rica in cooperation with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), three reports on regional African workshops and the Yokohama Message, Strategy and Plan of Action from the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction. In 1995-1996, the secretariat arranged for representation and distribution of materials for more than 70 conferences around the world.

62. The issue of "Cities at Risk" was selected as the 1996 campaign theme for the Decade to complement Habitat II. The campaign includes an international poster competition, an Internet conference and a special publication of Stop Disasters. Circulars, posters and publications intended to help countries, national committees and local community organizations plan their own campaigns have also been distributed.

H. Trust Fund for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

63. In response to a request made by the Economic and Social Council in 1995, a report on the core functions of the secretariat of the Decade and its financing was presented to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (A/50/521). The report has formed the basis for a special funding appeal the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has presented on behalf of the Decade in January 1996. The financial data of the report have also been integrated into the overall financial strategy of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which has been presented to the donor community during the first quarter of 1996. The annual requirement of the secretariat of the Decade, necessary for the execution of its core functions, amounts to $4.2 million.

64. During the reporting period, traditional donors to the Decade have continued their support. This has been crucial for the continuity of the secretariat of the Decade. Contributions have been received from Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of

America and the Commission of the European Communities. Donations were also received from the Australian Coordinating Committee for the Decade, UNICEF and the private sector. In addition, the secretariat benefits from the contribution in kind of a senior scientific expert and a Junior Professional Officer from Japan.

65. No additional funding commitments have resulted from the appeal beyond the traditional donors. The secretariat of the Decade calls upon other Member States for support.

I. Thematic and operational linkages

66. The report on natural and environmental diasters presented to the Commission on Natural Disaster Reduction at its fourth session in New York in April 1996 in the context of the progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States points out: 2/

> "The full recognition of the interdependence and the linkages between natural disaster reduction and the achievement of sustainable development is a decisive prerequisite for all progress both at the policy level and at the operational level. Any notion that disaster management is limited to action in specific disaster situations, and by special sectors of society only, is detrimental to the objective of saving lives and protecting property from natural and environmental disasters. Equally, there is a need to avoid the erroneous perception among some decision makers and the public that disasters are, by definition, synonymous with man-made or politically induced emergency situations. Natural and environmental hazards constitute a major threat to both developing and industrialized countries; natural and environmental disasters kill and maim people and can heavily disrupt the long-term economic and socials stability of societies. Concepts and measures to counter this threat deserve the highest possible attention."

67. The statement can be quoted as the theme for integrating natural disaster reduction as a cross-cutting issue into activities that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This notion has also been explicitly expressed in the General Assembly's Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 50/6), whereby international cooperation for development, including natural disaster reduction, aims at fostering economic growth, social development, environmental protection and justice.

68. The benefits of natural disaster reduction are also considered in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development. Section 7, "Humanitarian issues and development", of chapter II of the synthesis text on the Agenda for Development contains a subsection on early warning, prevention, preparedness and reduction of natural disasters. The text notes that disaster prevention and mitigation are of primary importance for reducing the need for disaster relief and calls for their integration into national strategies and programmes for sustainable development.

69. With a view to institutional issues and follow-up, the above-mentioned synthesis text on the Agenda for Development states in its chapter III that there is an urgent need for an integrated, interrelated and coherent implementation and follow-up at the national, subregional, regional and international levels of the recommendations and commitments of recent United Nations major conferences and agreements on development. The implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action will have to take due account of this commitment towards a coordinated approach. This must include consideration and involvement of the Decade in the forthcoming evaluation and overall review of Agenda 21, scheduled to take place during a special session of the General Assembly in 1997.

70. The high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1995 devoted its debate to development in Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in 1990s. The summary of the debate by the President of the Council notes that Africa is one of the continents prone to natural disasters which adversely affect development efforts. It states that programmes for disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation in accordance with the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World and its Programme of Action should be instituted to assist Africa to cope with the effects of natural disasters. 3/

71. The need and potential for disaster reduction as laid down in the concept and objectives of the Decade have also been considered in relation to the issue of mass movements of populations, whether as refugees or displaced populations. In the context of activities organized, inter alia, by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the reduction of disasters has been recognized as a means to reduce involuntary mass movements of populations resulting from sudden-onset natural or environmental disasters and similar emergencies.

72. In the context of the work of the Commission on Human Rights, the Decade's preventive, pre-disaster actions are seen as a contribution to the collective and individual protection of human rights through securing human life and ensuring basic requirements such as food, shelter and health. In this respect, the report on human rights and the environment submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-second session 4/ noted the relationship between disaster reduction and human rights issues.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

73. The ultimate objective of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction is to save lives and to protect material resources. This is achieved through the reduction of the vulnerability of communities at risk. This requires a viable basis for international cooperation in disaster-reduction activities to ensure the accomplishment of sustainable development into the twenty-first century. The most critical needs are the following:

(a) Acceptance must be gained among policy makers that disaster reduction is an investment in the protection of national assets;

(b) Concerted efforts must be made to translate existing knowledge into practice;

(c) Equitable access to the protection from natural disaster must be ensured for all, in developing and industrialized countries alike;

(d) The gap remaining between the expectations that have been raised for concerted multilateral support for disaster reduction and the present realities must be closed;

(e) International strategies for natural disaster reduction must be translated into concrete support for the development of national capabilities to protect people;

(f) The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction must be fully integrated into the concerted approach towards the implementation of the action plans of all recent global United Nations conferences;

(g) The international community's commitment to the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction must be translated, for the period of the Decade, into concrete support through the adequate provision of human and financial resources.

74. Urgent actions need to be taken by the Member States. Beyond the endorsements of disaster reduction concepts, concrete actions are essential to address the remaining tasks effectively. These include the following:

(a) The International Framework of Action is to develop options for institutional arrangements required by the year 2000 in order to maintain coordinated measures of disaster reduction beyond the Decade;

(b) United Nations agencies and organizations are to incorporate disaster reduction in activities of national planning;

(c) The Commission on Sustainable Development should be requested to consider natural disaster reduction as a cross-cutting issue in the evaluation and overall review of Agenda 21;

(d) National committees for the Decade and other partners in the International Framework of Action should solicit a more active involvement of the private sector in natural disaster reduction, including the promotion of commercial potential in research, technical applications and the provision of goods and services;

(e) The secretariat for the Decade should coordinate a comprehensive and coherent programme of information management and dissemination for natural disaster reduction;

(f) All partners in the International Framework of Action for the Decade, in particular the scientific and technical community, should participate in interdisciplinary and multisectoral networks;

(g) The United Nations is to initiate the preparatory process for the Decade's closing event, including the provision of the necessary resources, in order to ensure the mapping of a comprehensive disaster reduction strategy into the twenty-first century before the year 2000.

75. As previously referred to in the Yokohama message, 5/ the Decade stands at a crossroads. The United Nations and the world community can positively affect the course of events by reducing the suffering from natural disasters. Action is needed now to implement the policies and goals embodied in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

Notes

1/ IDNDR/STC/1996/4.

2/ E/CN.17/1996/20/Add.1, para. 53.

3/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth session, Supplement No. 3 (A/50/3/Rev.1), chap. II, para. 29.

4/ E/CN.4/1996/23.

5/ A/CONF.172/9.

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COORDINATION QUESTIONS: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report summarizes actions taken by the United Nations Secretariat to implement Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/61, and has been prepared in response to paragraph 6 of that resolution, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its substantive session of 1996 on action taken to follow up the resolution, including the findings of the ad hoc open-ended working group. The primary focus of the resolution is the expanding needs of delegations and Member States to obtain data that the United Nations and its specialized agencies have or plan to have in a format that can be accessed electronically by Member States.

I. AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE NEED TO HARMONIZE AND IMPROVE UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR OPTIMAL UTILIZATION AND ACCESSIBILITY BY ALL STATES

2. As stipulated in the resolution, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Need to Harmonize and Improve United Nations Information Systems for Optimal Utilization and Accessibility by all States was convened to address the issue of how Member States could be provided with unhindered access to United Nations data. During the meetings of the Working Group, it was evident that the challenge of providing electronic access to Member States to United Nations information has not been fully met, despite concern in this area. To date, the United Nations system had no clear mechanism for connecting permanent and observer missions to the many information services that were available. When a connection was made, there was no single straightforward way to get at the information in the databases maintained by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Access to information systems was not user-friendly and led to frustration on the part of users in the missions.

3. Generally, the problems experienced were related to (a) the fact that there was no comprehensive policy for the Organization in this area, and (b) budgetary constraints. As a result, new technologies that were being introduced by the computer industry were not adopted rapidly by the United Nations. The corresponding benefits could not, therefore, be fully realized by Member States.

4. However, the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have taken steps to start addressing the concerns of Member States. In particular, they have begun to take full advantage of the capabilities of the Internet. The emergence of Internet-based services has changed the way that large amounts of data are accessed, and has for the first time allowed the United Nations to house data and documents in a uniform format and still make such information available on many different computers worldwide. A user who establishes a link to a single computer in a given network can, without reconnecting, access data on any of thousands of computers connected to that network.

5. The Working Group noted that progress has been made by the United Nations and UNDP in providing data via the Internet. The Working Group was unanimous in its position that future development of information services to Member States be

focused using Internet technology. This is consistent with the policy established by the Information Systems Coordinating Committee (ISCC) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which has recommended that the United Nations and its specialized agencies use the Internet for information exchange and dissemination.

6. At its meetings, the Working Group focused upon a number of issues that need to be addressed by the Secretariat, including:

(a) The need to connect the permanent and observer missions directly to the sources of United Nations information via low-cost telecommunications links, and to have mechanisms that would allow them to post information electronically;

(b) The need for all Member States to have electronic connectivity, in particular via the Internet, in their capitals, specifically in States that do not currently have this service;

(c) The need for Member States to have access to a wider range of United Nations information on economic and social issues, development, political issues and other substantive programme areas, and to have all official documents available via the Internet;

(d) The need for Member States to have efficient electronic mail links with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and with each other;

(e) The need for specialized training for the staff of missions to enable them to take advantage of the facilities being developed for Member States, in particular electronic mail and Internet Web pages;

(f) The need to be advised of any other modalities whereby access can be made available to Member States to specialized databases not reachable from the Internet and to data on CD-Rom media;

(g) The need to be advised of new electronic technologies being implemented by the United Nations and specialized agencies that could also be advantageous for Member States, particularly video conferencing.

7. The Working Group further noted that a focal point in the Secretariat should coordinate the provision of information services to Member States. In turn, it was agreed that the permanent and observer missions need to have a competent, designated contact within each mission. The Secretariat has begun and will continue to maintain a list of contacts in the missions who will be responsible for liaison with the Secretariat on questions regarding electronic access to United Nations information.

II. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT AND UNDP IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS RAISED IN THE WORKING GROUP

8. To respond immediately to the concerns expressed by the Working Group, a focal point - the Director of Information Technology within the Office of Conference and Support Services of the Secretariat was appointed to address

issues related to the provision of information in electronic format to Member States. The Secretariat also established a dedicated help desk for permanent and observer missions to handle any technical problems that might be encountered in using database services provided by the United Nations. The United Nations focal point has been responsible for initial steps in collating the needs of the permanent and observer missions for United Nations information and coordinating actions to ensure that missions can easily connect to electronic sources of data.

9. In addition to the above-mentioned actions, which were taken directly by the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP has, as suggested by the Working Group, embarked upon an accelerated programme to provide Internet connectivity to all permanent and observer missions in New York that have requested this service. It should be noted that similar arrangements are being provided by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for permanent and observer missions that are located in Geneva. The major activities that have been undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat and UNDP to address the concerns and needs of Member States are described below.

A. Facilitating information access and dissemination to missions in New York

10. UNDP has been the focal point in assisting permanent and observer missions in New York in establishing telephone dial connections to the Internet and to its e-mail system. The assistance comprises advice, consulting, installation, and on-site training and induction to missions on computer equipment and the appropriate Internet access software to acquire telephone lines and modems, and their installation and operations. As of the beginning of June 1996, access by 93 missions to the UNDP Internet host has been established, as listed in annex III to the present report.

11. The UNDP Internet host also provides a place for an increasing number of permanent and observer missions in New York to publish information. Currently, the permanent missions of the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Ukraine and the United States of America have Web pages. Other permanent missions, such as those of Brazil and Norway, have Web pages under construction to be posted on this host.

12. On the occasion of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNDP provided assistance to the Summit secretariat by establishing information dissemination facilities in the conference centre so that government and other participants' statements were published on the UNDP Internet node as they became available. Thirty permanent and observer missions in New York availed themselves of the service offered by UNDP to access statements, at no cost to them, from their governmental representatives, the Secretary-General, the UNDP Administrator and other participants.

B. Facilitating information access and dissemination in country locations

13. In support of the resident coordinator system of the United Nations, UNDP works closely with the United Nations information centres and the United Nations organizations and agencies on information dissemination at the country level. The major thrust of UNDP country information access is in sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Partnerships and cost-sharing arrangements to promote information access and extend the Internet to country locations are made with donor and United Nations organizations, such as ITU, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development, the Canadian International Development Agency, the United States National Aeronautics and Space Agency, the United States State Department, and the Carnegie Foundation, as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

14. Over the last three years, UNDP has focused on promoting sustainable human development by creating and supporting a global initiative, the Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP). A direct result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), SDNP has already linked government organizations, the private sector, universities, non-governmental organizations and individuals in 24 developing countries through on-line electronic and other networking vehicles to worldwide information sources for the purpose of disseminating critical information on sustainable development. Successful SDNP cases include 180 organizations and tens of thousands of users in Bolivia using information employing communications media, such as radio and weekly dispatch of cassettes to electronic networks; and Pakistan, where SDNP handles 2,500 nodes catering to nearly 5,000 users country wide through its offices in four cities.

15. SDNP has funding of $3.3 million for an 18-month period; its status as of June 1996 is as follows:

(a) Twenty-four operational sites in the following countries or areas: Angola, Bolivia, Chad, China, Costa Rica, Estonia, Honduras, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Hungary, Fiji, Tunisia and Ukraine;

(b) Seven approved sites scheduled for operations in Cameroon, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Malawi and Panama.

16. The Economic Commission for Africa, in conjunction with the Canadian International Development Research Centre, organized the Africa Regional Symposium on Telematics for Development, held in Addis Ababa in April 1995 to promote the use of networks and the Internet in Africa. Following on from the Symposium, the Africa Networking Initiative was formed in partnership with ITU, UNESCO and other organizations.

17. Specifically in support of the United Nations system-wide initiative on Africa, UNDP has a $0.53 million regional project in Africa to promote the use of the Internet. The 1996 Africa Communications Meeting, held in Virginia,

United States of America, in May 1996, was attended by a number of national post, telephone and telegraph ministers and senior officials; it was partly sponsored by UNDP. Seminars on Internet policy, issues and applications have been requested by Governments and country offices in Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Zambia, Mozambique and Gabon. UNDP country offices in Ghana, Benin, Zambia and Mauritius are now connected to the Internet as a means to facilitate information exchange and enhance as well as disseminate local programme and project activities.

18. In Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Internet connections of UNDP country offices in Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova are facilitated in cooperation with key government ministries, such as those of environment, health and education, the private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations. The networking arrangements in Ukraine and Albania called FreeNet, which use the connection to the Internet, have had a profound impact on country access to information on democracy, governance and participatory development. UNDP country programmes, strategy notes and other programme information are made available on these country office Web pages.

19. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the UNDP country offices in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and Peru have Web pages on programme and project activities. Notable achievements in the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific have been the dissemination of programme and project activities financed by UNDP in Egypt, Malaysia, Mongolia and Viet Nam.

C. Electronic dissemination of United Nations information via the United Nations Internet Web server and other related Web facilities

20. Information dissemination is provided by the United Nations and its specialized agencies over the Internet in various ways. The first uses what is termed a Gopher server, which houses textual data on individual computers and has a very basic indexing scheme. The second uses a World Wide Web server, which houses textual data but can also provide graphical and even audio data if the computer accessing the information can process it. The Web format can also provide complex linkages between different computers by use of a referral mechanism. The United Nations has opted to develop most of its information services for the Web format rather than utilize the somewhat obsolete Gopher format.

21. The United Nations and almost all of the specialized agencies now have Web-based or Gopher-based information services operating on the Internet. Under the auspices of ISCC, a special task force has completed work on an official WEB site locator for the United Nations system of organizations, which provides linkages to many United Nations system Web pages.

22. The United Nations is actively expanding the amount of information on its Web server in New York. Additional information materials have been added to the Web site, including press releases and summaries, and other features that make the site more attractive and user-friendly. The United Nations home page was

revised in late 1995, new icons and hyperlinks were added, and a structure for presentation of the information was devised. Basic information on the United Nations was either added or updated or both, and a search facility now promotes user access.

23. In cooperation with the Office of Conference and Support Services and the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the Secretariat, the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat has initiated an interdepartmental group to expand the Web service to include information prepared by all substantive departments. One of the first substantive departments to participate in placing information on the Web server was the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, which has used the Internet to disseminate information about economic and social issues, including sustainable development, the advancement of women, global climate issues and desertification.

24. Other United Nations entities have also placed selected information on the United Nations Web server or are planning to do so. The Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the Secretariat has made available data from the Population Information Network and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. The United Nations Drug Control Programme has also established a Web site that contains considerable information about its activities and programmes.

25. The present structure of the United Nations Web server is based on a series of Web pages, each of which has its own subject or orientation. The top or home page consists of pointers to second-level pages or icons, which in turn allow users to obtain specific data or documents. The links allow the user to access the area of most interest with a click of the mouse without going through several layers or pages of information.

26. One of the pages, for example, contains a listing of all United Nations departments and offices away from Headquarters, which serves as an index (or pointer) to more detailed information that these departments and offices may have available on their own pages. In addition to access by department, another page, entitled "Global issues", provides a gateway to the work of the United Nations in its substantive areas, such as international peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, and humanitarian assistance. Each of these areas has a general introduction and is being equipped with hypertext links to access information posted by departments or offices.

27. Many offices located in Vienna have taken advantage of the potentials of the Internet to disseminate information of interest, among others, to Member States as well as information provided by Member States themselves. All this information can be accessed through the UNOV World Wide server. Most of the information ayailable is of highly specialized nature and results from treaty and other intergovernmental activities these offices serve and is mostly of interest to public officials in Member States.

28. The Office of Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) has made available, among others, the history and text of the five international treaties and four principles

elaborated by the United Nations that form the cornerstone of international space law together with reports of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. It also gathers and disseminates reports on space activities of Member States on the basis of information furnished to the United Nations. The Office is planning to expand its home page to include information on all space objects launched into outer space provided by Member States to the United Nations under the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

29. The Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division (CPCJD) provides information via the United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network, (UNCJIN), comprised of a World Wide Web database facility and of a discussion forum of some 800 practitioners worldwide associated with its activities.

30. The UNCJIN comprises, among others, United Nations Standards and Norms such as the Resolution on Measures against International Terrorism, documents on the Eighth and Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, UNCJIN newsletter and other publications, the World Crime Surveys from 1970 to 1990 and criminal justice country profiles.

31. Equally available on the UNOV server are documents of the United Nations Commission on the International Trade Law Branch (UNCITRAL) such as the Thesaurus and Index of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods, and the UNCITRAL Arbitration and Conciliation Rules.

32. The United Nations pages have been designed to allow for expansion to include most if not all of the areas of interest relating to the United Nations. The Department of Public Information is currently coordinating an interdepartmental initiative to redesign the United Nations home page to make further improvements in posting information and documentation in a structured and organized manner. While the substantive redesign is nearly complete, the migration of the underlying data will, it is hoped, be finished by end-August, so that the revised home page will be operational before the start of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. In addition, an interdepartmental group has been meeting to consider Internet issues and the implications of this electronic medium for the Organization, including copyright and related legal issues.

33. With the rapid development of the United Nations home page and the expansion of information both at Headquarters and abroad, the need for guidelines to standardize presentation and formats has become apparent. Accordingly, guidelines for the presentation of information on the Internet have been elaborated by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and widely circulated. Similarly, under the auspices of the Working Committee of the United Nations Publications Board, guidelines on electronic publishing have been drawn up and will be issued shortly as an Administrative Instruction, pending approval by the Publications Board.

34. The Internet represents a fundamental change in the technology of information. Distribution of information through available electronic channels has assumed a more central role in the Organization, but it must be recognized that there are a number of issues that remain unresolved, one of which is the

provision of information in additional languages. Efforts are currently being made to address this issue. It should be noted that this new technology will also require capital investments as well as a major training effort to upgrade the skills of staff in its utilization. These issues will be submitted for the consideration of Member States in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

D. The optical disk system

35. One of the most prominent United Nations information services available to permanent and observer missions has been the optical disk system, which was begun in 1988 in Geneva and extended to New York in 1992. The system contains all United Nations documents produced in Geneva and New York since 1993 (the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly) in all six official languages. It also contains all resolutions and decisions of the four main legislative organs of the United Nations. Access to the system is presently available to permanent and observer missions only via digital telephone dial-up lines using the Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN) technology. The system can be accessed by Member States anywhere in the world that ISDN telephone service exists.

36. Because of the greater reach of the Internet, there has been considerable interest in accessing the optical disk system via the Internet. The Secretariat is presently implementing a link that will connect the system with the United Nations Web server. When completed at the end of 1996, all documents on the system will be available to Member States on the Internet. In order to ensure that Member States have unimpeded Internet access to documents on the system, connections will be limited initially to permanent and observer missions. Progressively, service will be extended to governmental offices in capitals. Eventually, if enough excess capacity is available, in later phases of the project service may be extended to other users (research institutions, non-governmental organizations and other public organizations) and the public at large.

E. Provision of electronic mail to permanent and observer missions

37. The remote use of the United Nations electronic mail network by permanent and observer missions has been expanded during the last year. This service allows missions to communicate with United Nations and UNDP offices worldwide. Any mission can, upon application, be given a mailbox and can communicate with any individual listed in the United Nations directory. The facility also allows missions to send mail to and receive mail from any individual who has an Internet address. The global electronic mail network is used to send messages, documents and files to known addresses or mailing lists, and to receive similar material from senders on the network.

38. The UNDP mail network has also been made available to permanent and observer missions, and provides additional capabilities for electronic mail interchange with UNDP staff and field offices. The United Nations is looking at

technical solutions that would allow users who access either system to have available the directories of both systems.

F. Specialized Internet training given to the staff of missions

39. In order for Member States to utilize Internet services for their own dissemination of information, the Working Group requested that the United Nations Secretariat provide a training course for permanent and observer missions on use of the Internet, with an emphasis on HyperText Markup Language (the coding language for World Wide Web documents). The training programme consisted of three related Internet courses given over a two-day period (25 and 26 June 1996). The trained mission staff are expected to be capable of using standard Internet programs for Internet access and also be able to create World Wide Web pages for their respective missions, and should be able to train the other mission staff in the use of these Internet facilities. Additional training in this area is being considered by the Secretariat, based on the considerable demand.

40. In addition to the training programme described above, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library offers CyberSeek training to delegates and staff of permanent and observer missions. This training, done in a one-hour session, focuses upon retrieving and downloading relevant information from the Internet, with particular reference to sources important to international organizations. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also offers training sessions in the use of the optical disk system.

G. Other database and information services of interest to missions

41. The United Nations has supported a special dial-in service for permanent and observer missions to access the mainframe computer of the United Nations. In Geneva, dial-in services are provided by the International Computing Centre. Missions can access bibliographic databases (UNBIS), statistical information (UNSIS and COMTRADE) and other information available on mainframe computers in both New York and Geneva. However, these applications were designed many years ago and access to them is not always user-friendly. Initiatives are under way to convert applications from the older mainframe formats to newer technology. Press releases have now been moved to the Internet environment, where they are much easier to obtain. The bibliographic and statistical databases have been issued in CD-ROM format and are available at a very modest cost to be used on a personal computer. Accordingly, the Secretariat is not actively promoting mainframe services and is prepared to work with representatives from the missions to assist them in the use of newer technology to obtain data.

42. A considerable amount of information is currently available on CD-ROM and any permanent or observer mission that has a computer with a CD-ROM drive (standard on most recent models) can access a wealth of valuable United Nations data. A number of CD-ROMs and electronic products are available from the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information, which also maintains lists of other electronic products available from various offices of the United Nations. Many CD-ROM databases and on-line information services are

currently available from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, both at the External Collection Reference Desk and in the Woodrow Wilson Reading Room.

III. USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES BY PERMANENT AND OBSERVER MISSIONS: VIDEO CONFERENCING PLANS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

43. A video teleconferencing capability has been in place at United Nations Headquarters since the beginning of 1996. It was first used on 26 February 1996 to support the UNDP Global Staff Forum, which was held in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. In this instance, video conferencing was provided between New York, Barbados and South Africa. Subsequently, it has been provided between New York, Geneva, Vienna, Brussels, Singapore and New Zealand. Presently, the Secretariat has one set of video conference equipment in New York, which is used, as necessary, in various locations. The United Nations Office at Geneva and in Vienna are both in the process of acquiring video conferencing equipment. The necessary steps have been taken to ensure that the equipment being purchased is compatible.

44. It is now necessary to establish a long-term strategy for the Organization, taking into account its potential usage for conferences and the concomitant reduction in funds needed for travel to conferences. In the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, the Secretariat is preparing a proposal to equip the eight major duty stations with an appropriately configured video conferencing network. Given budgetary constraints, the Secretariat will propose a gradual introduction of this technology that will allow monitoring of its use and the savings that are likely to accrue once the initial capital investment in equipment has been made.

45. It will also be useful to try to coordinate the activities in this area among United Nations specialized agencies to avoid duplication of installations and ensure the optimum utilization of the equipment in place. An ISCC task force is investigating policies related to video conferencing and an inter-agency telecommunications coordinating group is looking into the more technical aspects of this new technology.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

46. The Secretariat expects that the developments that have been initiated to provide access to Member States will continue to be expanded during 1997 and into the next biennium. Requests for access to additional United Nations information can now be channelled to inter-departmental coordinating groups that deal with Internet services. A number of cooperative projects to provide Member States with electronic information have been instituted, such as that between the United Nations and UNDP. It is likely that, under the ISCC umbrella, additional initiatives will be undertaken to foster inter-agency cooperation in this area.

47. The Secretariat will continue to provide updates to permanent and observer missions on its electronic information services to Member States. The scope of

electronic information available is expected to expand significantly during 1997. In addition, with the Internet becoming an indispensable tool at very accessible rates, it can be foreseen that all missions will be equipped and connected to it by the end of 1997 at the latest. Additional modalities will be explored to provide training programmes for mission staff on how to access United Nations electronic information services. Annex I to the present report provides a description of United Nations services already available to missions and how to obtain each service, while annex II to the present report provides a timetable showing goals set by the Working Group together with the Secretariat and UNDP.

48. It is recognized that the initiatives described in the present report are still limited. The Internet tools that are likely to facilitate access by Member States to United Nations information are relatively new, and have required investments in equipment, software and staff training. Nevertheless, the United Nations has been able to offer new services to missions, essentially within an existing resource base. It will now be necessary to complete work on an information technology plan that better incorporates the needs of Member States for United Nations data in an easily accessible electronic format. The information technology plan, in turn, will need to be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, and appropriate resources will need to be allotted, as necessary.

Annex I

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE UNITED NATIONS TO PERMANENT AND OBSERVER MISSIONS OF MEMBER STATES

Service class	Service	Requirements	To obtain service contact
General assistance	General inquiries regarding services to Member States		United Nations focal point 963-6445
Internet access	Access to United Nations Web/Gopher servers for all United Nations information	Standard telephone line/modem Access software a/	UNDP 906-5111
Internet retrieval	CyberSeek: training sessions in retrieval and downloading Internet information	Internet access	United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library focal point 963-8861
Electronic mail	Direct connection to United Nations internal e-mail network	Standard telephone line/modem E-mail software a/	United Nations e-mail coordinator 963-6456
Optical disk system	Connection to optical disk system for all United Nations official documents	ISDN telephone line ISDN card in PC Optical disk software a/	United Nations optical disk coordinator 963-6586 or 963-6587
Optical disk system retrieval	Training sessions in retrieval and downloading from the optical disk system	Optical disk system access	United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library focal point 963-7415
CD-ROM services	United Nations data in CD-ROM format	CD-ROM drive	United Nations focal point 963-6445 or office issuing CD-ROM
Mainframe services (to be discontinued)	Remote connection to United Nations mainframe computer for selected database services	Standard telephone line/modem mainframe access software a/	United Nations focal point 963-6445

a/ Provided by the United Nations.

Annex II

ACTION PLAN FOR THE 1996-1997 BIENNIUM

Phase	Period	Connectivity enhancements (supported by UNDP)	Database enhancements (United Nations projects)
1.	April to June 1996	Connection of an additional 15 missions to United Nations Internet services	Pilot project to include a limited number of United Nations documents on its Web server Additional database services to be added by substantive departments
2.	July to December 1996	Connection of an additional 50 missions to United Nations Internet services	Link to optical disk system documents from the United Nations Web server (late 1996) Additional database services to be added by substantive departments
3.	January to December 1997	Connection of all remaining missions to United Nations Internet services	Additional database services to be added by substantive departments

Annex III

LIST OF PERMANENT MISSIONS a/ CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET VIA THE UNDP DIAL-IN SERVICE

Algeria
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Armenia
Bahrain
Barbados
Belarus
Belgium
Bolivia
Botswana
Brazil
Bulgaria
Canada
Cape Verde
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Denmark
Ecuador
El Salvador
Eritrea
Estonia
Fiji
France
Germany
Ghana
Guatemala
Guyana
Holy See
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Italy
Jamaica
Kazakstan
Kenya
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lebanon
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Marshall Islands
Mexico
Mongolia
Myanmar
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Norway
Pakistan
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Russian Federation
Samoa
San Marino
Saudi Arabia
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Sweden
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Uganda
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam

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a/ Total 93 missions.

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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS:
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Ways and means to enhance the capacity of the Organization and the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: information on developments in United Nations intergovernmental forums and at the inter-agency level

Report by the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 50/203, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-first session, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Commission on the Status of Women and to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the measures taken and the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 1/

2. At the time the resolution was adopted, Member States were informed that the Secretariat considered that the requested reports should be provided on a rolling basis: the reports to the Commission would contain early material; the reports to the Council would summarize that and add new material, including the results of the Commission itself; and the reports to the General Assembly would add further material, including the results of the Council's deliberations. Because of their close relationship and to expedite processing and consideration, the Secretary-General has combined the two reports requested under Assembly resolution 50/203 into the present single report.

3. Initial reports were submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session on ways and means to enhance the capacity of the Organization and the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/CN.6/1996/3) and on mandate, methods of work and multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/1996/2), as part of its consideration of follow-up to the Conference.

4. The present report is intended to update the information provided in the above-mentioned reports by indicating developments related to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in intergovernmental forums reporting to the Council and among the organizations of the United Nations system on an inter-agency basis, reflecting the steps taken to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way.

I. DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUMS REPORTING TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

5. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women has been taken up in many of the subsidiary bodies of the Council, as well as other intergovernmental forums.

6. The Commission on the Status of Women devoted the bulk of its fortieth session to the follow-up to the Conference; the results of its deliberations are reflected in its report. 2/

7. Some of the areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action were also central to the Programme of Action 3/ of the International Conference on

Population and Development (ICPD). In areas of common concern between the ICPD Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action, ICPD follow-up activities can also be considered as follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

8. Already in 1995, the Commission on Population and Development, at its twenty-eighth session, directed that relevant gender aspects from Chapter IV of the ICPD Programme of Action (Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women), as well as gender issues in other chapters, be dealt with in preparing the annual publication World Population Monitoring.

9. For the twenty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development (26 February-1 March 1996), the substantive theme was "Reproductive rights and reproductive health", and most of the reports prepared for the Commission are directly relevant to the Beijing Platform for Action, chapter IV, section C (Women and health).

10. In the new terms of reference of the Commission, 4/ which were endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/55, the Commission is called upon to adopt a topic-oriented and prioritized multi-year work programme, culminating in a quinquennial review and appraisal of the ICPD Programme of Action. That work programme, inter alia, will provide a framework for assessing the progress achieved in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. In the report of the Commission on its twenty-eighth session, which was noted by the Council in its decision 1995/236, the Commission called for the preparation of annual reports on a selected topic of the ICPD Programme of Action. 5/

11. At its twenty-ninth session, the Commission on Population and Development adopted a draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council, including an item that is relevant to follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action, chapter IV, section C, namely a request to the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All to coordinate the development of appropriate indicators, taking into account relevant research so that progress in addressing reproductive health needs can be assessed on a reliable basis by individual countries.

12. In 1997, the Commission on Population and Development will focus on international migration, with special emphasis on the linkages between migration and development, and gender issues and the family, with special emphasis on relevant aspects of chapters 4, 5 and 12. 6/ Related issues in the Beijing Platform for Action include chapter IV, section D (Violence against women) and chapter IV, strategic objective E.5 on women refugees; in addition, Commission reports will cover female migrant workers, who are mentioned under the Beijing Platform for Action, chapter IV, section F (Women and the economy).

13. The Commission on Human Rights, at its fifty-second session (18 March to 26 April 1996), dealt with a number of aspects concerning the human rights of women covered by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and elaborated on and expanded in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In a number of resolutions, it continued its efforts and support for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations in the area of human rights.

14. The Commission on Human Rights considered violence against women and the integration of the human rights of women into the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations under its agenda item 9, "Further promotion and encouragement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the question of the programme and methods of work of the Commission".

15. In its resolution 1996/48 on the question of integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, the Commission on Human Rights continued consideration of an issue that had been before it for several years. Referring, inter alia, to the Beijing Platform for Action's call on all relevant organs, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system and on other actors in the field of human rights to give full, equal and sustained attention to the human rights of women in the exercise of their respective mandates, the Commission called for intensified efforts at the international level to integrate the equal status and human rights of women into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activity. In line with paragraph 231 (g) of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Commission also encouraged the further strengthening of cooperation and coordination between the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women, and between the Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat. In that regard, the Commission requested that the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights be made available to both commissions at their respective sessions in 1997. It will be recalled that such joint work plans have been prepared annually since 1995 to facilitate the mainstreaming of the human rights of women (see E/CN.6/1995/13, E/CN.6/1996/13 and E/CN.6/1996/9).

16. On the question of violence against women, the Commission on Human Rights had before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and its Consequences (E/CN.4/1996/53 and Add.1 and 2). In its resolution 1996/49, the Commission, inter alia, welcomed the significant progress achieved in relevant sections of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, namely those on violence against women, women and armed conflict, and the human rights of women, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the reports of the Special Rapporteur are brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women to assist in the Commission's work in the area of violence against women. The Commission on Human Rights also decided to continue consideration of this question at its next session as a matter of high priority.

17. The Commission on Human Rights, under agenda items 11 and 15, adopted resolutions 1996/17 and 1996/24 on issues that are addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action, and have also been dealt with for a number of years by the Commission on the Status of Women, such as violence against women migrant workers, and traffic in women and girls. With regard to violence against women migrant workers, the Commission on Human Rights, inter alia, called upon States to apply the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and relevant measures emanating from recent conferences to women migrant workers as well. Continued consideration of this issue is expected at the Commission's fifty-third session.

18. Regarding traffic in women and girls, the Commission had before it the report of the Secretary-General on that question (A/50/369). The Commission concurred with the conclusions on this issue contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, and called upon Governments to implement the actions called for in paragraph 130 of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission will continue consideration of this issue at its fifty-third session, and requested that it be provided with the report of the Secretary-General that is to be prepared on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/167 on traffic in women and girls.

19. The Commission on Human Rights addressed the gender aspects of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in its resolution 1996/53. In its resolution 1996/46, the Commission reiterated its earlier recommendations for thematic special rapporteurs and working groups to include gender-disaggregated data in their reports and to address the characteristics and practice of human rights violations under their mandates specifically or primarily directed against women or to which women are vulnerable. In a number of resolutions, the Commission stressed for the first time the need to apply a gender perspective in reporting processes (1996/28 on arbitrary detention, 1996/30 on enforced disappearances and 1996/74 on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions). It also reiterated similar provisions on gender contained in earlier resolutions with respect to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (1996/33 B) and internally displaced persons (1996/52).

20. In a number of its country-specific resolutions, the Commission on Human Rights expanded upon or recommended for the first time the need to address the particular situation of women, or more generally to apply a gender perspective in the reporting processes, including in the collection of information and in formulating recommendations.

21. With regard to the protection of human rights in the context of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (Commission resolution 1996/43), the Commission called upon various mechanisms, including the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to address those aspects of discrimination and violence against women that increase their vulnerability to infection and to the impact of HIV/AIDS.

22. The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its fourth session, adopted a decision on combating poverty that welcomed the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission noted the important role played by women in poverty eradication strategies and the particularly difficult situations that they face. Governments were urged to formulate, as a matter of urgency, comprehensive national strategies to eradicate absolute poverty and reduce overall poverty, that integrate, inter alia, gender perspectives.

23. In its decision on demographic dynamics and sustainability, the Commission on Sustainable Development underlined the importance of the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of sustainable development planning and programmes, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action, and emphasized the need for Governments to integrate women on an equal basis with men in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies

and programmes for population and sustainable development. Further, the Commission urged Governments, United Nations system organizations and non-governmental organizations to mainstream a gender perspective, including gender-sensitive analysis, inter alia, as an essential step in the development and monitoring of sustainable development policies.

24. The Commission welcomed the contributions of major groups, noted their commitment to sustainable development objectives, and invited their participation in Agenda 21 follow-up at all levels. Although a chapter in Agenda 21 is devoted to women, in the work of the Commission women as a group are not singled out but are included under the agenda item "Major groups", which also comprises children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers. The Commission encouraged active support of major groups by Governments and international organizations, and encouraged Governments to involve major groups representatives in the preparations for the 1997 review process at the national level, both at the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and at the special session of the General Assembly in June 1997. Major groups were requested to report to the Commission on Sustainable Development on positive examples of international meetings at which innovative approaches to their participation have been made.

25. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, at its fifth session (21-31 May 1996), under the agenda item "Priority themes", had before it the report of the Secretary-General on practical measures in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice to eliminate violence against women (E/CN.15/1996/12) and the report of the Secretary-General on the draft plan of action on the elimination of violence against women (E/CN.15/1996/11), which contained the text of the Secretary-General's proposed plan of action.

26. The Commission's in-session Working Group made minor amendments to the draft plan of action and gave it a new title: the draft practical measures, strategies and activities in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice for the elimination of violence against women (see E/CN.15/1996/11, paras. 44-65, and E/CN.15/1996/CRP.12). The Commission recommended to the Council the adoption of a draft resolution on the elimination of violence against women, by which the Council, inter alia, would request the Secretary-General to undertake a process of interdisciplinary consultations, seeking the views of States and relevant United Nations and other entities on the draft practical measures (amended plan of action), and on that basis to prepare two reports for the Commission at its sixth session: (a) a report containing the results of the consultations and views received, and (b) a report containing the new proposed text of the draft measures for consideration and action by the Commission's Inter-sessional Working Group.

27. As noted by the Commission, the draft plan of action (E/CN.15/1996/11, paras. 44-65), within the sphere of competence and from the specialized perspective of crime prevention and criminal justice, pursued the overall goals of the Beijing Declaration. Its proposed measures implement and build upon the Beijing Platform's strategic objectives under chapter IV, sections D, (Violence

against women) and L (The girl child), which fall within the purview of the work of the Commission.

28. The draft practical measures, strategies and activities set out measures that aim at reform, upgrading and ensuring a "fair treatment" response on the part of criminal justice systems and its operatives, across legal systems, to all forms of discriminatory acts of exploitation of, and violence perpetrated against, women and the girl child. The envisaged fair treatment response involves gender mainstreaming and a gender-balanced perspective, across sectors, thus removing gender discriminatory policies, practices, procedures and legal provisions and approaching advancement of the status of women, realization of their rights and their empowerment vis-à-vis justice systems. The measures are meant to serve as a policy guide to States and their criminal justice operatives. They are designed to effectively prohibit, criminalize and penalize such acts, by provisions of criminal law and procedure and evidentiary rules, and aim to prevent and deter female victimization, to assist, support and empower female victims, and to foster the safety and security of females.

29. The draft measures reflect the Beijing Declaration, and Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights 7/ in terms of a crime prevention and criminal justice (including a criminal law) response. The measures are premised on the definition and scope of violence against women established by the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993 (arts. 1 and 2), as reaffirmed and extended in the Beijing Platform for Action (paras. 113-117). The draft measures criminalize all acts defined as violence against women by the Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action.

30. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is continuing to work on areas related to its mandate and to its tasks, as set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At its sixteenth session (19-23 February 1996), the INSTRAW Board of Trustees approved the programme activities for the biennium 1996-1997, including the four major thematic areas on which INSTRAW will base its work for research and training: economic and political empowerment of women; gender statistics and indicators; women, media and new communications and information technologies; and women, environment and sustainable development.

31. The Beijing Platform for Action (para. 335) calls upon the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to focus its follow-up actions to the Fourth World Conference on women on women's political and economic empowerment. Accordingly, the UNIFEM Consultative Committee, at its thirty-sixth session (31 January-2 February 1996), approved the two thematic areas, economic and political empowerment, as well as specific sub-themes for action.

32. Under economic empowerment, UNIFEM supports substantive and advocacy work in the areas of globalization and economic restructuring, with special emphasis on trade policy and new technologies and women's productive sustainable livelihoods, developing and demonstrating innovative ways that women can minimize threats to and maximize opportunities for sustainable livelihoods in the light of global economic changes.

33. Under political empowerment of women, UNIFEM focuses on the following sub-theme areas: gender and governance with emphasis on promoting gender-sensitive policies, legislation and processes; women's human rights, with emphasis on the facilitating women's increased access to international machinery in place in the areas of human rights and violence against women; peace-building and conflict resolution, with emphasis on women's roles in peace-building.

34. With regard to violence against women, UNIFEM was requested by the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/166, to establish a trust fund to strengthen its activities for the elimination of violence against women. Accordingly, the trust fund has been established; it is expected to become operational shortly.

35. The Consultative Committee approved in particular a programme that enables UNIFEM to undertake catalytic work in developing countries for the political and economic empowerment of women. In addition to operational activity, UNIFEM is also continuing to analyse, publish and disseminate findings and lessons learned from both its own work and experiences gathered in partnership with international regional and national organizations and networks, and organizations and bodies of the United Nations system on promoting women's political and economic empowerment.

36. The regional commissions each undertook actions to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; these actions are described in section III of the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation (E/1996/45).

II. COORDINATION OF UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

37. At the level of the United Nations system, steps have been taken to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way.

A. Revised system-wide medium-term plan on the advancement of women, 1996-2001

38. The Twenty-first Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women was held in New York on 6-8 March 1996, prior to the fortieth session of the Commission. Over the years, the Meeting has provided an essential forum for ongoing consultations, information exchange and collaborative action on women and gender issues. Approximately 45 United Nations Secretariat departments, funds, programmes and specialized agencies participate in the Meetings.

39. The Twenty-first Meeting discussed the draft revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, in particular practical aspects of coordination and collaboration in its implementation. The draft revised plan, which was prepared through extensive consultation, was approved by the Meeting and transmitted for approval to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). It represented an expression of the commitment of the participating entities to strive to collaborate, including through improved exchange of information, in implementing the Platform for Action. As such, the draft revised plan is intended to reflect system-wide efforts for the

advancement of women; provide a basis for synergies between various agencies; and maximize the system's comparative advantage and value added in each of the critical areas of concern.

40. In accordance with Council resolution 1993/16, the Secretary-General, in his capacity as ACC Chairman, arranged for the revision of the plan in the light of the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The draft revised plan was before the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session (see E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2). In its resolution 40/10 of 22 March 1996, the Commission recommended, inter alia, that the Council adopt the draft revised plan, taking into account the Commission's resolution and its comments contained in an annex to that resolution.

41. In accordance with Council resolution 1993/16 and Commission resolution 40/10, the draft revised plan was submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination in May 1996 for its comments (see E/AC.51/1996/L.5/Add.34).

42. Based on the draft submitted to it by the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting on Women, in April 1996 the ACC adopted the draft revised plan, which is before the Council for adoption at its present session (E/1996/16).

43. Once adopted, the revised plan will serve as one of the main monitoring and coordination tools for system-wide progress at all levels in implementing actions under each critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as gender-related recommendations of other recent global conferences and summits.

B. Establishment of an ACC inter-agency committee on women

44. In January 1996, the Secretary-General proposed to the members of ACC the establishment of a suitable ACC mechanism to promote sustained follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action. In his proposal, the Secretary-General recalled that ACC had attached importance to ensuring that the improvement of the status of women be placed within the mainstream of the work of the system in all its aspects. ACC had also recognized that the gender perspective should be fully integrated in the work of the three new ACC task forces established to promote a coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences. The three task forces that have been established provide support to country-level action with respect to social services, employment and the enabling environment.

45. Drawing on the experience of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development, the new committee on women is expected to contribute to the work programme to be adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, and to operate flexibly through task managers or lead agencies on various aspects of its work. The committee will be chaired by the United Nations, through the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues.

46. During its meeting in March 1996, the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting held its first exchange of views with the newly designated Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues, and discussed the proposal for a standing committee of ACC on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. As

requested, the Meeting prepared draft terms of reference and identified priority themes for the work of the proposed committee. The Meeting stressed that the new committee should address in a comprehensive way all aspects of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action coming within the purview of the United Nations system, and should interact closely both with the task forces established to follow up other recent United Nations conferences and summits and with other committees and task forces of ACC, including the Special Initiative on Africa.

47. Participants, in drawing up draft terms of reference, were of the view that the overall objectives and scope of an inter-agency standing committee on women's issues should go beyond operational and field-level activities and beyond economic and social dimensions to reflect the cross-cutting nature of gender issues, which require that political, peace-keeping and other issues also be addressed. Furthermore, it was determined that the committee's scope should be clearly global, thus focusing on developing and developed countries, and that it should focus on the practical requirements of gender mainstreaming in the framework of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the gender-related results of other recent United Nations conferences and summits.

48. Regarding the work programme of the new committee, it was proposed that it be linked to the multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission's consideration of critical areas of concern, as well as to the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women and the work of other functional commissions of the Council. Other issues, such as gender training, performance indicators, mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels, including conceptual and operational aspects, should also be taken up for in-depth consideration to ensure ongoing coordination and cooperation.

49. ACC, at its meeting in April, decided to establish an inter-agency committee on women, with the responsibility of addressing on a comprehensive system-wide basis all aspects of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gender-related recommendations emanating from other recent international conferences within the purview of the United Nations system. The terms of reference of the new committee are currently being finalized by ACC through correspondence.

C. Other inter-agency efforts

50. The work of the three new inter-agency task forces on basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods, and the enabling environment for economic and social development, which were established in 1995 by ACC to follow up recent global conferences and summits, has moved forward. As noted above, these task forces are expected to integrate a gender perspective in their work. The Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Development has met and agreed on terms of reference and a plan of work, and has established working groups on specific topics. Its major output will be a synthesis report for use in particular by the resident coordinator system that will summarize experience at the country level and across countries concerning the different elements that

support the promotion of employment and sustainable livelihoods in specific situations and the necessary indicators for monitoring progress in such areas based on country reviews. The Task Force on Basic Social Services, Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods has agreed to produce five end-products: (a) guidelines for the resident coordinator system; (b) a wall chart with indicators for social services; (c) best practices/lessons learned; (d) a pocket-card on advocacy; and (e) a set of indicators to measure the implementation of recommendations emanating from recent United Nations conferences in the social sector. The Task Force on the Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development will produce a synthesis of best practices or lessons learned on specific topics, and has established three subgroups to address major issues within its purview.

51. The Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development oversees and supports the work of the three ACC task forces, and seeks opportunities to ensure full support from the resident coordinator system at the country level for their initiatives. The resident coordinators/resident representatives in a number of countries have organized country-level follow-up action through new or reoriented inter-agency mechanisms.

52. ACC has continued to monitor follow-up to the statement on the status of women in the secretariats of the United Nations system that it adopted at its first regular session of 1995 (A/C.5/49/62, annex). The statement stresses the need to ensure that the advancement of women is a policy priority within the organizations of the common system and to take the necessary measures to improve the status of women in the secretariats of ACC members. A report on follow-up measures will be submitted to ACC at its second regular session of 1996. In addition, at its second regular session of 1995, ACC endorsed a policy framework on creating and maintaining a family-supportive work environment. This question is reviewed regularly by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel Questions) (CCAQ(PER)). CCAQ(PER) is also continuing the development and implementation of specific organizational policies and guidelines under this work/family agenda.

53. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), which was set up in 1981 to facilitate common processes, including joint programming among the principal funding agencies of the United Nations system (the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Food Programme), is undertaking an assessment of the policy implications for the JCGP member organizations of the Beijing Platform for Action. The objective is to strengthen the role of the Subgroup on Women in Development in promoting complementarity in the response of the JCGP organizations in their implementation of the recommendations made in Beijing. For this purpose, a study has been commissioned to identify the implications of the Beijing Platform for Action for each JCGP member organization; examine the policy implications for each of them; identify areas of complementarity and cooperation; and suggest mechanisms for follow-up.

Notes

1/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

2/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6 (E/1996/26).

3/ Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

4/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 7 (E/1995/27), annex I, sect. IA.

5/ See ibid., sect. III.

6/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 7 (E/1995/27).

7/ Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.

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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE THIRD DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

By its resolution 48/91 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly proclaimed the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, beginning in 1993, and adopted the Programme of Action proposed for the Decade. In paragraph 16 of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit each year to the Economic and Social Council a detailed report on all of the activities of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies analysing information received on activities to combat racism and racial discrimination.

The present report contains information received by the Centre for Human Rights on activities undertaken or envisaged by Governments and intergovernmental organizations on the implementation of the Programme of Action by United Nations bodies and specialized agencies within the framework of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 50/136 of 21 December 1995, the General Assembly invited all Governments, United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and interested non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to participate fully in the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, in accordance with the revised Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003), which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/146 of 23 December 1994.

2. The present report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 50/136, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit each year to the Economic and Social Council a detailed report on all activities of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies on activities to combat racism and racial discrimination.

3. With a view to responding to that request, on 15 March 1996 the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States and letters to United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. At the time this report was being drafted, he had received 11 replies from which a synthesis has been derived.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

A. Commission on Human Rights

4. At its fifty-second session, the Commission on Human Rights discussed the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and declared all forms of racism and racial discrimination to be among the most serious violations of human rights in the contemporary world, to be combated by all available means. 1/ It appealed to those States that had not yet done so to consider ratifying all relevant international instruments, particularly the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 2/ and the Convention Against Discrimination in Education. 3/ The Commission, by its resolution 1996/8 of 11 April 1996, again invited the Secretary-General to establish a focal point within the Centre for Human Rights, as called for by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/59.

5. By the same resolution, the Commission urged all who were implementing the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to pay particular attention to the situation of indigenous people.

6. It deeply regretted that the financial resources that should have been allocated for the implementation of the 1994-1995 biennial programme for the Third Decade were not provided and requested the Secretary-General to include the activities not implemented in the 1994-1995 programme in the future programme of the Decade and to provide the necessary resources.

7. The Commission also called upon the international community to provide the Secretary-General with appropriate financial resources for efficient action against racism and racial discrimination and strongly appealed to all Governments, organizations and individuals in a position to do so to contribute generously to the Trust Fund for the Programme for the Decade.

8. With respect to contemporary forms of racism, the Commission considered the reports of the Special Rapporteur. By its resolution 1996/21 of 19 April 1996, it expressed profound concern and unequivocal condemnation of all forms of racism and racial discrimination and all racist violence, expressed deep concern at and condemnation of manifestations of racism and racial discrimination against migrant workers and members of their families and other vulnerable groups in many societies, and categorically condemned the role played by some print, audiovisual, and electronic media in inciting racial hatred.

9. The Commission also called upon all Governments to enact and enforce legislation to prevent acts of racism and invited all Governments to take, where possible, measures to provide assistance to and rehabilitation of victims of acts of racism. In addition, it regretted that the Special Rapporteur had again encountered difficulties in his efforts to fulfil his mandate, owing to lack of resources and urged all Governments to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur. It also decided to extend for three years the mandate of the Special Rapporteur to examine incidents of contemporary forms of racism and recommended a draft decision to the Economic and Social Council calling for extension of the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

10. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to provide, without further delay, the Special Rapporteur with all necessary assistance and resources to carry out his mandate and enable him to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session and a comprehensive report to the Commission at its fifty-third session.

B. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

11. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, established under the terms of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, has the tasks of examining periodic reports submitted by States parties on their implementation of the Convention, consideration of communications from individuals or groups under the terms of article 14 of the Convention, and deliberation on disputes between States parties.

12. At its forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions, the Committee continued to discuss the convenience of holding a joint meeting with the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, as it had done in 1994 and 1995. Members of the Committee agreed that a meeting between the bureaux of both organs should be scheduled for August 1996.

13. During its forty-eighth session, the Committee engaged in a useful exchange of views with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. It was noted that the Programme of Action for the Third Decade faced a lack of resources and, unless a supplementary financial

effort was made, very few of the activities planned for the period 1994-1997 would be carried out.

14. Two important contributions of the Committee to the Third Decade are its development of innovatory procedures to address situations of racial discrimination which require urgent response and its early warning procedure. Early warning measures are aimed at preventing existing problems from escalating into conflicts and may include confidence-building measures to identify and support structures to strengthen racial tolerance and consolidate peace in order to prevent a relapse into conflict. Urgent procedures are aimed at responding to problems requiring immediate attention to prevent or limit the scale or number of serious violations of the Convention.

15. At its forty-eighth session, the Committee considered the situation in nine countries: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Croatia, Israel, Rwanda, Liberia, Guatemala, Burundi, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. With regard to each, the Committee either requested urgent reports from the Government or took other appropriate action within its mandate.

16. The Committee has developed a work procedure for the prevention of and urgent response to situations of racial discrimination, by which it may request information and reports on an urgent basis, make appropriate recommendations and offer missions of experts to assist States parties in addressing difficulties. The procedure is designed to facilitate rapid reaction and involvement by the Committee, both regarding the States parties and other United Nations bodies, with a view to taking the necessary steps to prevent systematic and massive violations of human rights and to help prevent situations involving racial discrimination to decline into conflict. The Committee believes that, by means of the procedure, new avenues permitting the Committee to fulfil its mandate in a more efficient way had been opened.

17. The Committee continues to improve its contribution to the prevention of racial discrimination by sharpening the focus of its activities. It expects to continue to improve its relations with States parties through the joint action initiated by meetings of the persons chairing treaty bodies.

C. International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

18. Significant issues were addressed on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March 1996. The Secretary-General highlighted in his message that the United Nations offered a medium of communication between cultures and a resource for Member States to study each other's strategies for accommodating diversity. However, much remained to be done. Vast political and technological changes that had occurred around the globe had, while bringing new possibilities for understanding between peoples, brought with them economic and social uncertainty. In that climate, some had sought security in smaller and more exclusive racial and ethnic groupings, leading to social marginalization, suffering and conflict.

19. The Secretary-General emphasized that adoption of severe and stiff laws was vital to assuring and promoting tolerance among social groups. The education of each and every individual should foster awareness of the common ties of humanity and give an impetus to the development of cultures of tolerance and solidarity.

20. He concluded that, on the eve of the twenty-first century, it was essential for the international community to continue its efforts to eradicate all forms of racism and racial discrimination. With more commitment to those efforts, it would be possible to create a world of peace, prosperity, equality and tolerance for future generations.

21. In connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights stated that the United Nations had developed a wide range of mechanisms to combat discrimination, including the International Convention, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism and the Third United Nations Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

22. He said that, despite the disappearance of all institutionalized forms of racial discrimination from the world, the international community was still confronted with a resurgence of racist ideologies and practices, particularly in the economic and social fields. He pointed out that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the provisions of which should be embodied in every country's national law, had been ratified by 146 States. He also added that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, through its early warning procedure, increased its effectiveness.

23. The Secretary-General's message was communicated at a round table organized by the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Information Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

24. During the round table, participants and invited guests discussed the theme "Racism at the eve of the twenty-first century". The discussion was led by Ms. Edith Ballantyne, of the NGO Subcommittee on Racism, and the members of the panel were Mr. Michael Banton, Chairman of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Prof. Jean Ziegler, University of Geneva; and Dr. Deborah Robinson, Executive Secretary of the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches.

25. Representatives of permanent missions at Geneva and of non-governmental organizations and students from Geneva and Annemasse also participated in the round table.

26. In his presentation, "Preparing for a new era", Mr. Michael Banton noted that the International Convention had been astonishingly successful but that its text reflected the understandings of the early 1960s.

27. In 1970, when the Committee first started to consider State reports, some members expected Governments to correct all the evils and inequalities in their societies. They thought of the State as omnipotent. However, it had been appreciated that some things were better implemented by voluntary action, by

agencies independent of direct governmental control, or by private companies. That lesson would have to be built into strategies for the future.

28. Mr. Banton went on to say that the first challenge for the new era was to find a way to get States to accept all of their responsibilities. The new era must act on the understanding that prevention was cheaper than cure. He viewed the problems of racial and ethnic discrimination in the future to be more difficult because they reached to the very heart of societies.

29. Concerning preparation for the new era, he noted that particular attention must be paid to the mass communications media, specifically its negative contribution to disaster in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda. Then he proposed new policies to be developed in association with experienced persons in those fields.

30. Dr. Robinson dealt with culture as a means to overcome racism and racial discrimination. She described the positive influence of cultural exchange among societies with a view to changing the perceptions and attitudes of people, especially youth, towards those who were different, whether from the North or the South.

31. Some participants expressed their regret that, unlike the first Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the Second and Third Decades had not aroused the same enthusiasm within the international community. Nevertheless, general welcome was expressed for the fact that the United Nations, through the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, had decided to attack the resurgence of anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

32. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights concluded the work of the round table by assuring the participants of the commitment of the High Commissioner and of the Centre for Human Rights to the campaign against racism and racial discrimination and encouraged the participants to pursue their own activities to the same end.

33. As part of the activities organized on the occasion of the Day, 30 paintings by 10 artists were exhibited at the Palais des Nations from 18 to 29 March 1996.

D. Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

34. In his report to the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1996/72 and Add.1), Mr. Glèlè-Ahanhanzo, Special Rapporteur, presented his findings on contemporary manifestations of racism and racial discrimination in several countries. He had also submitted a report to the General Assembly (A/50/476).

35. He emphasized that the end of apartheid did not mean the end of racism and that contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related

intolerance, together with anti-Semitism, boded ill for the international community. He pointed out that his missions to Brazil, France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had enabled him to begin a dialogue with the Governments of those countries and to get a sense of the actual situations there. Through exchanges with those involved on a daily basis, the missions provided a means of going beyond the impersonality of written texts and statistics in order to come to grips with living reality.

36. He concluded that an enormous task still remained to be completed in view of the complexity of the issues. He hoped that all the countries covered by his mandate would receive him and provide him with assistance for the discharge of his mission.

E. United Nations bodies

1. Department of Public Information, United Nations Secretariat

37. The Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination requests the Department of Public Information to undertake specific activities that could be carried out by Governments and relevant non-governmental organizations to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March) each year.

38. In view of this mandate, the Department set out the following objectives of an information strategy on the Decade: to increase public awareness and broaden substantive knowledge of the issues; to mobilize additional resources; and to generate greater political support for appropriate action.

39. The strategy emphasizes the following key messages:

(a) All forms of racism and racial discrimination, including those resulting from official doctrines of racial superiority, such as ethnic cleansing, are among the most serious violations of human rights and must be combated by all available means;

(b) Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, as stated by the Commission on Human Rights.

40. The strategy is mainly targeted at the news media, non-governmental organizations, governmental officials, policy makers, students and educators. Information materials are also being channelled to the general public through non-governmental organizations, educational and cultural institutions, religious organizations and others.

41. The Programme also states that the Department should publish posters for the Third Decade and informative brochures on the activities planned for it. Relevant documentary films, reports and radio broadcasts should be considered. The General Assembly supported the organization of a seminar on the role of mass media in combating or disseminating racist ideas, with the cooperation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Department.

42. The products and services of the Department include promotional print materials, press coverage and audio-visual programmes. These are made available by the Department at United Nations Headquarters, by the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, which provides regular services to the Centre for Human Rights there, and by United Nations information centres and services around the world.

43. In an effort to link issues, World Chronicle included a 30-minute United Nations television programme on the International Year for Tolerance, which included the issue of racism. Since the beginning of the Third Decade, United Nations Radio has produced more than 50 programmes and features on racial discrimination, in the six official United Nations languages and in such non-official languages as Bangla, Dutch, Hindi, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Turkish and Urdu.

44. The Department produced and distributed 30,000 copies of a six-language poster for the Third Decade (DPI/1651) in September 1995. Writers were contacted for a series of articles on key human rights issues, including racism and ethnic conflict in late 1995, but the articles had to be cancelled owing to the financial crisis.

45. To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination, a backgrounder has been produced each year. In 1995, it was distributed electronically to the United Nations information centres and services. The Department has also provided the centres with suggestions on ways to celebrate the Day.

46. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit and the focal points on human rights in the Department's Promotion and External Relations Division continue to respond to numerous requests for information and publications. Since the beginning of the Third Decade, the Visitor's Service at Headquarters has arranged for 10 special briefings for 247 people on issues related to human rights and racism.

47. The Department's network of United Nations information centres and services continues to play a significant role in furthering the objectives of the Third Decade. In addition to disseminating relevant materials received from Headquarters, they have adapted and translated materials locally. They have also organized or co-sponsored special commemorations, events, meetings, public gatherings and briefings; participated in seminars, panels and lectures for educational and other institutions; and given numerous interviews to national and local media.

48. The following activities, inter alia, were undertaken by selected centres and services around the world:

(a) UNIC Bucharest coordinated a round table on racial discrimination. Speakers included the President of the Jewish communities, the Armenian Consul and the representative of the International Migration Organization;

(b) At UNIC Buenos Aires, a total of 120 people attended the screening of "Pinceladas", and the Centre issued a press release on the issue of racial

discrimination. The Centre also organized a seminar with the Ministry of the Interior, on discrimination in Argentina, and an NGO forum on the struggle against discrimination;

(c) UNIS Geneva organized a number of activities with the Centre for Human Rights including a round table on the theme "Combatting racial discrimination and related intolerance in democratic society". As part of its regular servicing, UNIS Geneva continues to ensure full coverage of the annual meetings of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year UNIS Geneva cooperated with the Centre for Human Rights in organizing an art exhibition devoted to human rights and racial discrimination, and a round-table discussion on the theme "Racism on the eve of the XXIst century";

(d) UNIC Lomé organized a round table on the issue of racial discrimination.

49. The Department is preparing a series of backgrounders - features and factsheets on indigenous concerns that will be published in the current biennium. It is also planning to update and reprint some of the backgrounders included in the information kit produced for the International Year of Indigenous People. A recent backgrounder, entitled "Indigenous women: taking control of their destiny" (DPI/1717), has been published and distributed in English, French and Spanish. Work is also progressing on the design for a poster on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, to be issued in the second half of 1996.

2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

50. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a mandate to provide international protection to refugees and to seek durable solutions to the problem of refugees. UNHCR shares the objectives of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, mainly through the elimination of the human rights violations which would help prevent refugee flows and promote the durability of voluntary repatriation as a solution. The Office has launched a public awareness campaign in over a dozen countries of asylum in Europe, North America and Latin America in order to combat racism and xenophobia and sensitize people to the plight of refugees. In 1996, UNHCR is also expanding its campaign in Africa and the Middle East.

F. Specialized agencies

51. In paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 50/136 of 21 December 1995, the General Assembly urged the specialized agencies, inter alia, to pay particular attention to the situation of indigenous people in their implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism.

1. International Labour Organization

52. The International Labour Organization reported that it had been dedicated since its origins to the promotion of social justice. Hence, the elimination of discrimination was integral to all of its activities.

53. The principal means of action in that field was through international labour standards. In the area of "prevention of discrimination" the ILO had supported the adoption of international conventions and the supervision of their implementation by a highly developed machinery aimed both at pointing out problems and at contributing to their solution. Over 6,300 ratifications had been received on 176 conventions.

54. The ILO's principal convention in the area of discrimination was the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) which had been ratified by 120 countries. It required all ratifying States to "declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in respect thereof". It defined "discrimination" as "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment or occupation".

55. In supervising the implementation of the Convention, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations carried out a special survey on equality of opportunity and treatment. The survey found that race was one of the grounds most frequently referred to in national texts prohibiting discrimination and also noted several recent instances in which it had been added to national legislation on the subject. The Committee concluded that there was currently a legislative trend to make discriminatory practices based on race a punishable offence. The Committee also noted the fact that the majority of the many comments addressed to States related to discrimination on grounds other than race or colour.

56. Complementing the efforts of the Discrimination Convention to combat racism is the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which revises the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107). It has so far only nine ratifications. There is strong concern for the prevention of discrimination on the basis of race inherent in these instruments.

57. In execution of its responsibilities related to combating racism and in the context of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the ILO carries out a large number of promotional and assistance activities concerning indigenous and tribal peoples around the world. They are intended in some cases to assist Governments and indigenous representatives to analyse Convention No. 169 so as to determine whether they wish to ratify it; to promote the implementation of its principles even in the absence of ratification; and to assist development initiatives affecting indigenous and tribal peoples, irrespective of the ratification. The ILO has recently assisted Namibia, Brazil, the Philippines, Guatemala and several Eastern European countries.

58. When a convention has been ratified, ILO's supervisory bodies examine governmental reports and other information concerning its implementation and make comments with a view to helping countries improve their implementation.

2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

59. As part of its contribution to the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, UNESCO is planning to compile international instruments that aim to combat racism and discrimination and will organize by the end of 1996 an international expert meeting on the origins of extreme nationalism, xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism and the ways and means of eradicating them.

60. In 1996-1997, UNESCO also plans to analyse prejudices and negative stereotypes that lead to discrimination and support national activities aimed at the prevention of discrimination.

61. In connection with the same subject, UNESCO and the Marangapoulos Foundation for Human Rights organized an international expert seminar on the prevention of discrimination against immigrants, refugees and persons belonging to minorities (Greece, 13-14 May 1994).

62. The seminar examined the strengths and weaknesses of international law and institutions as means of protection for those who were the targets of discrimination. It noted in particular the weaknesses of institutions of implementation, combined with conflicting attitudes among Governments on the degree and nature of protection to be given to different groups of victims.

63. Participants reviewed the current conditions that constituted fertile grounds for virulent ethno-nationalism, xenophobia and racism - for example, the process of transition, dislocation, unemployment and ideological vacuums - and the factors at different levels which interacted with each other to create those conditions.

64. On the positive side, it was noted that a comprehensive framework which in principle protected everyone had evolved. Under international human rights law, the rights contained in the instruments should be ensured and protected for everyone "under the jurisdiction" of States parties. The broadness of the concept meant that it applied to minorities as well as majorities, irrespective of their ethnic or national origin, colour or religious affiliation; it included citizens and the various categories of aliens residing in a country.

II. ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENTS

65. The recommendation to the Commission to convene a third world conference against racism and racial discrimination is pending the decision of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General has not received enough replies or substantial contributions to guide the General Assembly to take the relevant steps.

A. Denmark

66. The Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that in 1995 particular appreciation had been paid to the measures taken to combat ethnic discrimination in the labour market, such as the establishment of the Board of Ethnic Equality, the introduction of a bill on the prohibition of unequal treatment and the "Barrier Action Plan", comprising 18 initiatives in broad areas of the labour market and education/training fields to improve the conditions of ethnic minorities.

67. The 18 initiatives of the action plan to break down barriers are:

(a) "Pool of funds" for mutual cultural understanding;

(b) Continued training programmes for the staff of the public employment service;

(c) Staff manual;

(d) Interpretation assistance to the public employment service;

(e) Testing of acquired skills;

(f) Guidance courses;

(g) Guidance to immigrants at AMU courses;

(h) Guidance in language schools;

(i) More offers of lessons in Danish;

(j) More immigrants should learn Danish;

(k) Experiments with compensatory education;

(l) Qualifying vocational training courses;

(m) Experiment with AMU courses;

(n) Special initiatives in technical and commercial schools;

(o) "Pool of funds" for untraditional training and employment initiatives;

(p) Evaluation of untraditional projects;

(q) Fixed regional framework of coordination of measures;

(r) Coordination of guidance activities in relation to immigrants and refugees.

68. Likewise, the introduction of a circular setting down guidelines for placement activities in relation to unemployed persons who belong to ethnic

minority groups in connection with the handling of job offers in the public employment service was implemented.

69. Special temporary measures had been initiated on the basis of special appropriations, the "pool of funds". In 1996, 16,000,000 Danish kroner were allocated for that purpose. Vocational courses would be offered for immigrants in order to open up the labour market to ethnic minorities, in both the private and public sectors.

70. The Danish report stated that the Government was actively participating in relevant European Union and International Labour Organization initiatives.

B. Uruguay

71. The Government of Uruguay stated that an internal discussion had recently begun on two initiatives which demonstrated Uruguay's intention to adopt effective legislative and administrative measures to promote tolerance and eradicate practices involving discrimination and racism. First, the executive had placed before the Parliament a bill for the creation of an ombudsman with wide-ranging powers, including the power to deal with complaints about specific cases of racial discrimination.

72. Secondly, it was a matter of domestic policy to collect international suggestions, particularly from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, for incorporation into the national statistical register, the Race Module (Modulo Raza). The Government of Uruguay noted that the new system would create an opportunity to gather official statistics on the social, economic and educational situation of the various races that lived in the country.

III. ACTION TAKEN BY INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

73. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) serves as a framework for negotiating certain commitments in combating racism and racial discrimination.

74. The Declaration on Aggressive Nationalism, Racism, Chauvinism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism, adopted in 1993 by the Rome Council of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is of particular importance.

75. In the Declaration the Ministers focused attention on the need for urgent action to enforce the strict observance of the norms of international humanitarian law, including the prosecution and punishment of those guilty of war crimes and other crimes against humanity. The Ministers also agreed that OSCE must play an important role in those efforts. The clear standards of behaviour reflected in OSCE commitments include active support for the equal rights of all individuals, in accordance with international law, and for the protection of national minorities.

IV. ACTIVITIES FORESEEN IN 1996 AND 1997

76. UNHCR and the Centre for Human Rights will organize an inter-agency meeting on the work of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination in the second half of 1996.

77. In accordance with paragraph 7 of the revised Programme of Action for the Third Decade, UNHCR and the Centre for Human Rights are planning to organize a seminar on the topic "Evaluation of the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, with particular reference to articles 4 and 6". The seminar will take place in Geneva from 9 to 13 September 1996.

78. The Centre for Human Rights is in the process of finalizing the arrangements for a seminar on racism and immigration, to be held in late 1996/early 1997.

79. Lack of resources has prevented the implementation of the plan of activities to be carried out during the first third of the Third Decade (1994-1997). 4/ For the same reason, no action has been taken regarding the proposal, made in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action, 5/ to erect a memorial in honour of the victims of racism and racial discrimination.

80. There is need to establish a focal point for the Third Decade, as called for by the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 1996/8.

V. TRUST FUND FOR THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE THIRD DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

81. The Trust Fund for the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination is a continuation of the fund established in 1973 by the General Assembly in application of paragraph 17 of the Programme of Action for the first Decade (contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 3057 (XXVIII) of 2 November 1973) and re-established in 1983 in the framework of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade (contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 38/14 of 22 November 1983).

82. Notwithstanding the commitments made by the international community, especially at the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993), at which the rapid and complete elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination was declared to be a priority task of the international community, contributions to the Fund have remained below the levels hoped for. It is therefore certain that, unless a supplementary financing effort is made, very few of the activities planned for the 1994-1997 period will be carried out. 4/ It is important to note that contributors can allocate their contributions to whatever particular activities they deem especially worthy of interest within the context of the effort to combat racism and racial discrimination. The current status of the Fund is reflected in the annex below.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

83. The contributions made by the various United Nations bodies and organizations, Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to the work of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination illustrate global and concerted efforts to address the issues and to provide long-lasting solutions.

84. Through these efforts, the international community has been alerted to the eruption of new forms of racism, causing massive violations of human rights. However, the present report demonstrates that the Third Decade deserves more attention from the parties concerned in order to achieve its goals. The Council may wish to devote one of its sessions to the question of allocating financial and human resources to the Programme.

85. The Council should also reiterate its suggestion for the appointment of a focal point within the Centre on Human Rights to coordinate the activities of the Decade.

86. As for the proposal for a third world conference on racism and racial discrimination, the very limited number of replies received by the Secretary-General is the main reason for calling upon the General Assembly to determine whether further consultations are necessary with Governments.

87. Finally, Governments should continue to contribute, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, educators and the media, to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, the implementation of which is coordinated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 3 (E/1996/23) (to be issued).

2/ General Assembly resolution 2106 A (XX).

3/ United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 429, p. 39 ff.

4/ See E/1994/97, paras. 66-69.

5/ Ibid., para. 75.

Annex

STATUS OF THE TRUST FUND FOR THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE THIRD DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 1995

Statement of income and expenditure and changes in reserves and fund balances for the biennium 1994-1995 ended 31 December 1995

(United States dollars)

	1995	1993
Income		
Voluntary contributions	172 025	85 642
Interest income	6 261	2 538
Other/miscellaneous income	4 401	-
TOTAL INCOME	182 687	88 180
Expenditure		
Staff and other personnel costs	-	21 000
Travel	-	28 549
Total direct expenditure	-	49 549
Programme support costs	(541)	5 441
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(541)	55 990
NET EXCESS (SHORTFALL) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	183 228	32 190
Refunds to donors	-	(28 336)
RESERVES AND FUND BALANCES BEGINNING OF PERIOD	36 974	33 120
RESERVES AND FUND BALANCES END OF PERIOD	220 202	36 974

Statement of assets, liabilities, reserves and fund balances as at 31 December 1995

Assets		
Cash and term deposits	219 620	27 936
Pledged contributions receivable	-	13 000
Other accounts receivable	582	196
TOTAL ASSETS	220 202	41 134
Liabilities		
Unliquidated obligations	-	4 160
TOTAL LIABILITIES	-	4 160
Reserves and fund balances		
Cumulative surplus (deficit)	220 202	36 974
TOTAL RESERVES AND FUND BALANCES	220 202	36 974
TOTAL LIABILITIES, RESERVES AND FUND BALANCES	220 202	41 134

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E/1996/84
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Substantive session of 1996
New York, 24 June-26 July 1996
Agenda item 6 (a)

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS:
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 26 June 1996 from the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 21 July 1995 from the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which has been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1996 as document E/1996/15, and, more specifically, to the suggestion of IMO concerning the periodicity of the publication of the United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods.

At the 15th meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Dangerous Goods Panel (DGP/15, Montreal, 17-26 October 1995), the members discussed this issue and the consequential periodicity of the Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (Doc. 9284). The Panel confirmed its opinion that the present two-year cycle should be the maximum period between amendments to the United Nations Recommendations, noting that the issue of the transport of dangerous goods was a dynamic subject and that, for industry, changes needed to be reflected as quickly as possible.

Without encountering any of the difficulties mentioned in document E/1996/15, ICAO has published the Technical Instructions from 1984 to 1986 on an annual basis and biennially since 1987. Therefore, as the Dangerous Goods Panel has strongly advised, the present two-year cycle will be maintained.

(Signed) Philippe ROCHAT

96-16968 (E) 090796 100796

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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the President of the Council on consultations held with the Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its substantive session of 1995, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1995/58 of 28 July 1995 on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations. In paragraph 16 of that resolution, the Council requested its President to continue to maintain close contact on those matters with the Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and to report thereon to the Council.

2. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/34 of 6 December 1995, in paragraph 14 of which it requested the Council to continue to consider, in consultation with the Special Committee, appropriate measures for coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system in implementing the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

3. Taking into account the above-mentioned resolutions, the President is of the view that the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations should strengthen existing measures of support and formulate additional programmes of assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Most of these Territories are islands, small in size and population, geographically isolated and vulnerable to natural disasters, such as hurricanes and cyclones. They are also relatively undeveloped economically and therefore are particularly dependent on external assistance. The specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as international and regional organizations, should therefore be invited to examine and review conditions in each of the Territories, commensurate with the pressing needs of the peoples concern for increased transfer of resources, technology and know-how, and take appropriate measures to accelerate economic and social progress.

4. In accordance with the terms of Council resolution 1995/58, the President of the Council maintained close contact with the Chairman of the Special Committee during the period under review and, on the basis of those contacts and in the light of related developments, submits to the Council the observations set out below, with a view to facilitating Council consideration of the present item.

5. During the year, members of the Council and the Special Committee followed closely the work of their respective bodies relating to the item. The President considers it both useful and essential that such contacts and cooperation continue to be maintained and strengthened to mobilize the maximum possible assistance to the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

6. According to the information provided by specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, during the period under review a number of specialized agencies and organizations have continued to extend assistance to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, in response to the

relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Council and the Special Committee. A number of organizations have extended or formulated such programmes of assistance from within their own budgetary resources, in addition to their respective contributions as executing agencies of projects funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the primary provider of assistance.

7. A number of assistance projects have continued to be funded by UNDP in close collaboration with other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system.

8. In respect of Anguilla, the UNDP programme of assistance for the period 1992-1996 is described in document DP/CP/ANL/2: Second Country Programme for Anguilla, approved by the UNDP Governing Council in May 1992. The total resources for this programme presently stand at $1,269,000, which includes the IPF allocation of $1,149,000 and available cost-sharing resources of $120,000. By holding the mid-term review of the country programme at the end of 1995, UNDP responded to the request for continuing the examination and review of the conditions in Anguilla. Activities regarding the planning of the next programming period, 1997-1999, are under way, whereby UNDP actively seeks to involve the specialized agencies and other organizations associated with the United Nations system. It needs to be taken into consideration, however, that for the years to come, Anguilla has been affected by Net Contributor Country (NCC) provisions and will be receiving UNDP's TRAC resources on a reimbursable basis.

9. In recognition of the specific characteristics of small island economies and in order to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of Anguilla, the on-going programme places emphasis on UNDP support for human resources development (HRD), reform of the public sector, and environmental and natural resources management. In general, the mid-term review confirmed these areas of concentration by concluding that UNDP has made a positive contribution to the country in all of these areas.

10. Within the area of HRD, the programme has focused on education and in particular on teacher training. Some 85 per cent of primary teachers have been trained at the newly created Teacher's Training Institute, up from 60 per cent at the start of the cycle. In the area of public sector reform, UNDP assistance focused on the Development Planning Unit, where activities included the preparation of a public sector investment programme and the preparation of capital investment programmes. Multiple UNDP activities in the environmental area were instrumental in bringing about a generally high level of environmental awareness. Area plans for four selected zones are being prepared and a country environmental profile as well as a national land-use plan have begun to inform national policy for land-use planning and physical development. Environmental activities are now concentrated in a single project ANL/94/002 "Environmental management".

11. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Luis and Marilyn, which struck Anguilla in early September 1995, leaving behind damage estimated at $100 million, the UNDP Resident Representative effectively coordinated response measures with the assistance of the United Nations disaster management team.

12. In response to the Programme of Action ensuing from the Global Conference of the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which took place in Barbados from 25 April-6 May 1994, two aspects of the Programme of Action are receiving particular UNDP attention: (a) the establishment of the collaborative network (SIDS/NET) to facilitate access by small island developing States to vital environmental information; and (b) the implementation of a technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP), based on a regional assessment of unfunded technical cooperation, including capacity-building gaps in the priority areas under the 14 chapters of the Programme of Action, to promote inter- and intra-regional cooperation on sustainable development. In order to enhance the coordination of follow-up activities in the Caribbean a joint CARICOM/ECLAC/UNDP consultative mechanism, with responsibilities for coordination, results monitoring and resource mobilization, has been set up in Trinidad. The preparation of a directory of scholars and institutions is nearing completion.

13. Bermuda, with a per capita income of $10,280 in 1983 and of $27,790 in 1994, according to the 1995 Oxford Analytica Ltd., has been affected by Net Contributor Country (NCC) provisions. The country does have a fourth cycle IPF carry-over of $48,000 but short of an on-going Country Programme with UNDP, it has not been issued an IPF for the UNDP fifth programming cycle. However by decision 91/29 of the UNDP Governing Council at its thirty-eighth session in June 1991, Bermuda, like other NCCs, is entitled to participate in other components of the UNDP Programme, including projects financed from the regional and interregional IPF and from special programme resources (SPR). The Caribbean component of the Fourth Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean, described in document DP/RLA/4, has made provision for technical assistance in the amount of $7 million to benefit the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), where Bermuda enjoys observer status.

14. The Government of Bermuda has given indications of its present reluctance to enhance its cooperation with the United Nations system. However, UNDP continues to explore areas of cooperation such as facilitating the establishment of a national United Nations focal point.

15. The UNDP programme of assistance for the British Virgin Islands for the period 1995-1996 is described in document DP/CP/BVI/3: Third Country Programme for the British Virgin Islands, approved by the UNDP Executive Board in April 1995. In recognition of the specific characteristics of small island economies and in order to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of the British Virgin Islands, the programme places emphasis on UNDP support to provide policy advice and inputs for institutional strengthening, primarily aiming at the formulation of an integrated development strategy.

16. The British Virgin Islands, with a GDP per capita of $10,882 in 1992, has been affected by Net Contributor Country (NCC) provisions during the fifth UNDP programming cycle. Accordingly, the British Virgin Islands has been issued a reimbursable IPF of $97,000 for the remainder of the fifth programming cycle (1995-1996). However by decision 91/29 of the UNDP Governing Council at its thirty-eighth session in June 1991, the British Virgin Islands, like other NCC countries, is entitled to fully participate in other components of the UNDP Programme, including projects financed from the regional and interregional IPF and from special programme resources (SPR). Activities regarding the planning

of the next programming period, 1997-1999, are under way, whereby UNDP actively seeks to involve the specialized agencies and other organizations associated with the United Nations system.

17. In response to the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, UNDP has launched a regional Capacity 21 funded project that will provide the British Virgin Islands and other participating countries with the opportunity to strengthen their capacities to manage and implement sustainable development plans and programmes at the local, the national and the regional levels.

18. Also in response to the Programme of Action, two aspects of the Programme of Action are receiving particular UNDP attention: (a) the establishment of the collaborative network (SIDS/NET) to facilitate access by small island developing States to vital environmental information; and (b) the implementation of a technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP), based on a regional assessment of unfunded technical cooperation, including capacity-building gaps in the priority areas under the 14 chapters of the Programme of Action, to promote inter- and intra-regional cooperation on sustainable development. In order to enhance the coordination of follow-up activities in the Caribbean a joint CARICOM/ECLAC/UNDP consultative mechanism, with responsibilities for coordination, results monitoring and resource mobilization, has been set up in Trinidad. The preparation of a directory of scholars and institutions is nearing completion.

19. As regards the Cayman Islands, the UNDP programme of assistance for the period 1993-1996 is described in document DP/CP/CAY/3: Third Country Programme for the Cayman Islands, approved by the UNDP Governing Council in February 1993. The total resources for this programme are $1,457,000, which includes the IPF entitlement of $163,000 and cost-sharing commitments of $1,294,000. By holding the mid-term review of the country programme in mid-1995, UNDP responded to the request for continuing the examination and review of the conditions in the Cayman Islands. Activities regarding the planning of the next programming period, 1997-1999, are under way, whereby UNDP actively seeks to involve the specialized agencies of the United Nations and other organizations associated with the United Nations system. It needs to be taken into consideration however, that for the coming cycle, the Cayman Islands has been affected by Net Contributor Country (NCC) provisions and will be receiving UNDP's TRAC resources on a reimbursable basis.

20. In recognition of the specific characteristics of small island economies and in order to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of the Cayman Islands, the programme places emphasis on UNDP support for human resources development and economic planning and management. Human resources development is primarily directed at strengthening administrative, managerial and technical skills in selected government departments. Economic planning and management seeks to promote effective management of public expenditure and more active involvement of the Government in macroeconomic planning through improved fiscal management and the rationalization and integration of planning mechanisms.

21. In response to the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, two aspects of the Programme of Action are

receiving particular UNDP attention: (a) the establishment of the collaborative network (SIDS/NET) to facilitate access by small island developing States to vital environmental information; and (b) the implementation of a technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP), based on a regional assessment of unfunded technical cooperation, including capacity-building gaps in the priority areas under the 14 chapters of the SIDS Programme of Action, to promote inter- and intra-regional cooperation on sustainable development. In order to enhance the coordination of follow-up activities in the Caribbean, a joint CARICOM/ECLAC/UNDP consultative mechanism, with responsibilities for coordination, results monitoring and resource mobilization, has been set up in Trinidad. The preparation of a directory of scholars and institutions is nearing completion.

22. The UNDP programme of assistance for Montserrat for the period 1992-1996 is described in document DP/CP/MOT/3: Third Country Programme for Montserrat, approved by the UNDP Governing Council in May 1992. The total resources for this programme presently stand at $632,000, which includes the IPF entitlement of $434,000 and a government cost-sharing commitment of $198,000. By holding the mid-term review of the country programme at the end of 1995, UNDP responded to the request for continuing the examination and review of the conditions in Montserrat. Activities regarding the planning of the next programming period, 1997-1999, are under way, whereby UNDP actively seeks to involve the specialized agencies and other organizations associated with the United Nations system. It needs to be taken into consideration however, that for the coming cycle, Montserrat has been affected by Net Contributor Country (NCC) provisions and will be receiving UNDP's TRAC resources on a reimburseable basis.

23. In recognition of the specific characteristics of small island economies and in order to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of Montserrat, the programme places emphasis on UNDP support for environmental and natural resources management, an area which has absorbed more than 90 per cent of the available resources. There has been substantial progress in the establishment of a physical planning unit to direct natural resource management and in the preparation of an environmental profile of the island and an inventory of its historical, archaeological, cultural and natural resources. In the aftermath of volcano activities that started in July 1995 throwing Montserrat into a crisis situation characterized by recurrent evacuations of the whole population from Plymouth, the capital, to the opposite end of the island, the strengthened physical planning unit has been able to take the lead in reappraising national development programmes in the light of the new situation. Further UNDP support with regard to an appropriate disaster response strategy in dealing with thousands of internally displaced persons is anticipated during 1996.

24. Faced with the volcano eruption and following Hurricanes Luis and Marilyn, which struck Montserrat in early September 1995, leaving behind a damage estimated at $5 million, the UNDP Resident Representative effectively coordinated response measures with the assistance of the United Nations disaster management team and in close cooperation with the office of the British Governor.

25. In response to the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, two aspects of the Programme of Action are receiving particular UNDP attention: (a) the establishment of the collaborative network (SIDS/NET) to facilitate access by small island developing States to vital environmental information; and (b) the implementation of a technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP), based on a regional assessment of unfunded technical cooperation, including capacity-building gaps in the priority areas under the 14 chapters of the Programme of Action, to promote inter- and intra-regional cooperation on sustainable development. In order to enhance the coordination of follow-up activities in the Caribbean a joint CARICOM/ECLAC/UNDP consultative mechanism, with responsibilities for coordination, results monitoring and resource mobilization, has been set up in Trinidad. The preparation of a directory of scholars and institutions is nearing completion.

26. The UNDP programme of assistance for the Turks and Caicos Islands for the period 1993-1996 is described in document DP/CP/TCI/3: Third Country Programme for the Turks and Caicos Islands, approved by the UNDP Governing Council in February 1993. The total Fifth Cycle IPF entitlement under this programme amounts to $910,000. By holding the mid-term review of the country programme in mid-1995, UNDP responded to the request for continuing the examination and review of the conditions in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Activities regarding the planning of the next programming period, 1997-1999, are under way, whereby UNDP actively seeks to involve the specialized agencies of the United Nations and other organizations associated with the United Nations system.

27. In recognition of the specific characteristics of small island economies and in order to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of the Turks and Caicos Islands, the programme places emphasis on UNDP support for public sector management, education and environmental management. UNDP resources were primarily used to provide technical services in key areas of the public sector. The provision of a computerized data collection system for customs allows the Government to access accurate statistical data for planning purposes and increases its revenue inflows. At the sectoral level, a review of the country's education system has provided the Government with options to be pursued in streamlining the system to meet labour market trends.

28. In response to the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, two aspects of the Programme of Action are receiving particular UNDP attention: (a) the establishment of the collaborative network (SIDS/NET) to facilitate access by small island developing States to vital environmental information; and (b) the implementation of a technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP), based on a regional assessment of unfunded technical cooperation, including capacity-building gaps in the priority areas under the 14 chapters of the Programme of Action, to promote inter- and intra-regional cooperation on sustainable development. In order to enhance the coordination of follow-up activities in the Caribbean a joint CARICOM/ECLAC/UNDP consultative mechanism, with responsibilities for coordination, results monitoring and resource mobilization, has been set up in Trinidad. The preparation of a directory of scholars and institutions is nearing completion.

I. SUPPORT BY SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

International Maritime Organization

29. With financing from Norway ($891,000), IMO has recently completed a project to develop port state control capabilities in the Caribbean, and a regional agreement on this matter was adopted in February 1996. The project seeks to enhance the capacities of the island nations and territories of the Caribbean to ratify and implement effectively the global standards for maritime safety adopted by IMO. Three IMO fellowships have been allocated to Turks and Caicos Islands, Bonaire and Curaçao in the context of this project.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

30. UNESCO has supported journalism training activities in favour of media practitioners from a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories with a view to contributing to democratic processes and enhancing citizens' participation. In particular, journalists and other media specialists from Anguilla, British Virgin Islands (associate member of UNESCO and thus benefiting from and contributing to UNESCO's programmes and activities) and Montserrat were able to attend training courses offered by the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (Kingston, Jamaica). Similarly, journalists from Tokelau received training under the Pacific Journalism Training and Development regional project.

31. The UNESCO General Conference at its twenty-eighth session (1995) established the Project on Environment and Development in Coastal Regions and in Small Islands (CSI), which aims, in particular, at securing integrated coastal zone planning and management by advancing knowledge, promoting the application of research results and related capacity-building. The CSI project based on interdisciplinary inputs from UNESCO's intergovernmental programmes, comprises four pilot projects and focuses on sites in the South Pacific, East Africa Southeast Asia and Caribbean regions. It will take into account the needs of the remaining Non-Self-Governing small island Territories.

II. CONCLUSION

32. Subject to any directives that the General Assembly might give at its fifty-first session and in conformity with such decisions as might be taken by the Council, the President of the Council shall continue to maintain close contact with the Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.